

A little bit more

Written by Dr. Celeste Lopez
Friday, December 07, 2012 2:25 PM -

It's that time of year again. The time that parents look forward to and also dread all year. We feel the pressure of making a perfect holiday for our children but time, finances and reality like to step in and remind us that perfection isn't possible.

How could it be possible to get all the gifts our kids have requested without breaking the bank? It becomes easier when we realize that getting them everything on the list is not only not necessary, it isn't even desirable. The only thing that would happen if you bought them everything they wanted is to ensure yourself that next year their list will be longer.

Often their favorite gift isn't the one they asked for but the unexpected surprise. I will never forget my first Christmas with my son. It was magical because he had just been placed in my home the weekend before and I felt the need to buy everything I thought a 4-year-old would need. Because I was starting from scratch I bought clothes, bedroom furniture, cars, balls, stuffed animals, action figures, etc. Every time I went to the store I found something else that I thought he wouldn't be able to live without.

I will admit that I was ridiculous that year with the belief that I had to provide him with everything he had never had. Presents were wrapped and piled all over the living room and I couldn't wait until Christmas morning to see the joy on his face.

On Christmas Eve I gave him a new pair of pajamas because that is our families' tradition. It was a pair of dinosaur pajamas that just happened to have a small bag of dinosaurs attached. He was thrilled! He loved the dinosaurs and played with them all evening. The next morning as I had the video camera rolling he walked down the steps with his dinosaurs clutched in his hands and surveyed all the gifts. He dutifully opened a few gifts as I handed them to him and seemed happy but after a few gifts he asked if we could just play together. I remember sitting in the living room surrounded by a pile of still wrapped presents as we both played happily with five plastic dinosaurs that came free with his pajamas. It was the first time that I realized that the most important thing I gave him that Christmas wasn't the gift, it was a family to celebrate with.

It took a 4-year-old to show me that the packages weren't important. What was important was that he finally had somebody to play with. It reminded me of the end of *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* – "Maybe Christmas," he thought, "doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas ... perhaps... means a little bit more!"

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I try to remember this lesson every Christmas when the list of things to do is running long and time is running short. We already gave them the most important gift that they can receive — a family to spend Christmas with. Everything else you give them will never be as important. Nothing under the Christmas tree will ever bring you as much joy as the people sitting around it. So take the time this Christmas to thank God for the gifts he gave to you. They are after-all exactly what you asked for, the perfect size, and, of course, completely non-refundable.

I wish you all a safe and healthy holiday. MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Dr. Celeste Lopez graduated cum laude from The University of Utah College of Medicine. She completed her Pediatric residency training at the Children's Hospital of Michigan. She is certified with The American Board of Pediatrics since 1992. In 2003 she moved her practice, Wishing Well Pediatrics, to Delphos and is located at 154 W. Third St. She is the proud mother of a 12-year-old son.