

A Season for Dreams, Wishes, and Gift Giving

*"I just want to say this: We are all only children,
and we deserve to live a life of peace and happiness!"*
(Yeva Skalietska, a 12 year old Ukrainian refugee)

Sadly, too many children are living with war, whether in Ukraine, Yemen, or any of the 30 or so other countries around the world where conflicts are raging (<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-currently-at-war>). How contrary this tragic reality is to the world adults claim to want to provide for their young ones! How contrary it is to the season we are entering when greetings of peace abound! But what can we do about it? What are we willing to do about it? If we have the will, there is actually a lot we can do. But let's first acknowledge that that is exactly what children like Yeva, quoted above, want, what ALL children want.

Sharon Harding is one person who offers us ten suggestions from children, themselves. You can read them here: <https://rediscoveredfamilies.com/10-insightful-suggestions-children/>. Similarly, Erin Kurt provides a list of 10 things children really want. You can read her list here: <https://www.lifehack.org/articles/featured/the-top-10-things-children-really-want-their-parents-to-do-with-them.html>. And Mark Hawkins compiled a list of "The 15 Biggest Wishes Of Children Around The World" and shares them at this website: (<https://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/the-15-biggest-wishes-children-around-the-world-and-how-you-can-help.html>). You'll see children are not asking for things as much as they are seeking love, our time and attention, a sense of belonging, security, and peace.

Whether you are celebrating Christmas, Hanukkah, or Kwanzaa, let's be sure our gifts to the children in our lives truly fulfill their wishes and reflect the meaning of the season. Games and toys are great for fun, play, and even a little mischief, but we can also choose gifts that help nurture those things that they want at a deeper level. Such gifts can stimulate learning, promote peaceful cooperation, and provide a sense of safety. And in doing so, they can also respect the Christian commemoration of the birth of the one we call Prince of Peace; the Jewish commemoration of the divine miracle of lasting, light-giving oil; and the African-American celebration of family, community, and culture. Here we offer some helpful suggestions to make that possible.

When you choose gifts for the children in your life, please keep these questions in mind and **consider toys that:**

- ❖ Promote respectful, non-stereotyped, nonviolent interactions among children
- ❖ Can be used in many ways
- ❖ Allow children to be in charge of the play

- ❖ Appeal to children at more than one age or level of development
- ❖ Are not linked to video games, computers, TV, or movies
- ❖ Can be used with other toys for new and more complex play
- ❖ Will stand the test of time as children develop new interests and skills
- ❖ Help children develop skills important for further learning and a sense of mastery
- ❖ Can be used alone or with others
- ❖ Can be enjoyed by boys and girls

Choose:

- ❖ Toys that foster cooperation and teamwork, like dolls and puzzles and some board games
- ❖ Toys for constructing, like building blocks and molding clay
- ❖ Toys that inspire creative arts, like craft supplies and musical instruments
- ❖ Toys that promote movement, like bikes, wagons, and sports equipment
- ❖ Toys that promote dramatic play, like costumes and props, puppets and magic sets
- ❖ Toys that enhance the imagination, new ideas, and problem solving, like science and nature kits
- ❖ Toys that respect the environment, that can be reused and recycled

And don't forget books, magazine subscriptions, Teddy Bears, and you. There's nothing better than YOUR time!

Happy, Peaceful Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa!

Happy, Peaceful Holidays to All!

Thanks to www.truceteachers.org for the information presented in this flier. Visit their website, as well as www.greenamerica.org (search "Gifts for Children") for more ideas about gifts that promote the positive values we want for our children and have the extra benefit of being sweatshop-free and non-toxic.

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For more information about Pax Christi, visit www.paxchristinys.org or www.paxchristiusa.org.

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