



## **The New Good Holidays: Enjoying More in an Age of Less**

John Robbins, author of [Diet for a New America](#), recently released his latest book, [The New Good Life: Living Better than Ever in an Age of Less](#). As we approach the holiday season, noted for colossal consumption and massive marketing especially aimed at children, John's ideas on living better with less can assist in shifting the focus of your family holidays from consuming to connecting.

The juvenile marketing industry is gigantic, persistent and pervasive. Books are dedicated to it, including [What Kids Buy](#) and [Marketing to the New Super Consumer: Mom and Kid](#). In [Creating Ever-Cool: A Marketer's Guide to a Kids Heart](#), author Gene Del Vecchio informs his readers that "children influence the purchase of more than \$160 billion in family goods and services." Chapter titles in his book include "Touch the Boy's Psyche," "Touch the Girl's Psyche," "Understand Their Fears" and "Gratify Their Senses." Marketers reading this book learn how to persuade young people to chronically feel that they must buy new things. Del Vecchio says, "Part of cool is having something that others do not. That makes a kid feel special. It is also the spark that drives kids to find the next cool item." Essentially, marketers are interested in creating a life-long consumer driven to purchase new products based on the belief that what defines him as special is not who he is but what he purchases.

John Robbins comments that "Every time you acquire books, toys, games, clothes and other items for your kids, you have an opportunity to reinforce this [consumer-driven] mindset or to step beyond it." He suggests learning the value of hand-me-downs as a way to save money and resources. "It also helps kids to grow up valuing relationships more than shopping and thus to have a better sense of where their true wealth lies."

Visit stores that specialize in used children's items. These items can be both high quality and a great value. One way for children to experience this is to sell their old video games to purchase new ones. My daughter enjoys visiting Game Stop to trade in games she is no longer interested in playing and purchase used ones she wants to play. You can also check online at Freecycle.org – a network of 4,812 groups with 6,552,000 members around the world – or Craigslist.com. Items on Freecycle are free.

Shifting your family's focus, especially during the holidays, from consuming to giving can be a rich experience. Children can create lists of gifts for relatives and friends. Gifts can include items that they have made themselves, plants that they have grown,

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poetry they have written, and food they have baked. A child may be inspired to learn how to knit, crochet or bead to create holiday gifts for loved ones. Cards with "Free Foot Massage", "Good for Clearing the Table after Dinner" or "Exchange for One Hour of Babysitting My Little Brother" are terrific gifts that cost nothing and are deeply appreciated. Your family can enjoy many hours of crafting, creating and cooking as you put together meaningful holiday gifts that require no driving to the mall and searching for a parking space.

In [The New Good Life](#), John includes a poem of gratitude written by a daughter to her mother. The poet, Mary Korzan, did not thank her mother for money or presents nor for a car or designer clothes. She thanked her for the things her mother did while she thought her daughter was not looking.

*When you thought I wasn't looking,  
You hung my first painting on the refrigerator,  
And I wanted to paint another.*

*When you thought I wasn't looking,  
You fed a stray cat,  
And I thought it was good to be kind to animals.*

*When you thought I wasn't looking,  
You kissed me goodnight,  
And I felt loved.*

May your holidays be bright with these kinds of things that connect and endear you to one another even when you thought your children weren't looking.

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