

Five Xmas presents to give yourself

Submitted by Kellie Mundell on Mon, 2015-12-14 10:19

The seasonal festivities are an interesting time to consider from a wellbeing perspective. While fun for most of us, Christmas also brings more misery and suicides than any other period. As research accumulates to show exactly what we need to do to enjoy wellbeing, it's worth a brief consideration of those five factors magnified by the effects of Santa and Scrooge.



Credit: Izabela Habur

The five factors most experts agree on as wellbeing components are: money, family and friends, health, work and giving.

We are often guilty of spending money we haven't got on things we don't want to impress people we don't even like. However, even for people with that sense of perspective the modern obscenely commercialised Christmas is just a nightmare. This especially for anyone on a tight budget as many of the toys pushed by retailers are wondrous items light years ahead of anything I ever got on Christmas morning – and genuinely necessary if your child is to not be one of the “weird ones” in the playground.

Spending more time with *family* over the season can be a mixed blessing for many so I'll swerve this topic with a story about an accident. I used to take a certain (very difficult) family member along on the annual "hide from the world" holiday in Centre Parcs. One year she tripped into a shallow pond on Christmas Eve, soaked herself and bruised her knee. Not badly hurt but she **had to** stay in the villa watching TV enjoying unlimited fuss and concern from a small army of Parc staff for the duration. Regardless, we didn't have to drag her around complaining so I now know the answer to the question "what's the perfect present to give an attention seeking hypochondriac for Christmas?"

There are no guarantees in life when it comes to *health* but how to minimise the amount of luck you need is simple. Eat well, exercise lots, drink alcohol in moderation, enjoy sober and regular sleep patterns and meditate several times a week and more in times of stress.

This may not go too well for many of you (us) over the coming few weeks!

If you have a *job* you enjoy that stimulates and motivates you then you enjoy better physical and mental health than someone similar who doesn't work. Simple test: do most days pass quickly rather than slowly?) If the first two items above aren't going well for you then you'll be either missing work or caught between a rock and a hard place – once you've finished banging your head on this wall you can get back to banging your head on the work wall.

Studies conclusively show that people who *volunteer* are happier than those who don't (it's a primeval thing about reciprocity and being useful so as to minimise the chance of the tribe pushing you out of the cave into the snow).

In short, the happiest people you'll see over Christmas will be in the corner of a pub having a quiet beer or two (or a juice/coffee) catching up with old friends and family, maybe excitedly unwrapping a book they genuinely always wanted to read about an aspect of their job they find especially interesting and making their way home from dishing out soup to the homeless.

Challenge. *Getting through it all in one piece is enough of a challenge isn't it?! Season's greetings and all the best for 2016.*

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