

A Season for Dreams, Wishes, and Gift Giving

“My biggest hope is for the war to end and for everyone to return to their homes and for people to live happily.”

(Salam, a Syrian child)

Thankfully, not all children live with war, homelessness, or sorrow, but all children have similar wishes to Salam's. All children have some anxieties, hurts, and hopes. The past nearly two years of pandemic have gotten all of us, including children, to realize priorities we didn't even know we had. For example, (most) children actually want to go to school! They want to be with their friends. They want to be able to play together—outdoors, in person.

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>). The first few offer no surprises: wishes to have fun, to play, to make mischief. But then they get more serious. They include wishes to be accepted, for friendship, safety, peace, trust, home, parents, and to learn. Hawkins's article also includes ideas for how to help make these wishes a reality. Of course, we can't provide all of them, and we certainly can't wrap many of them in pretty paper and present them during this season of gift-giving, but we can provide some of them.

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 build friendships, a sense of acceptance, and trust. They 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 are some helpful suggestions for how 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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