

# Shrink Rap: 'Tis the Season for Giving

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In the spirit of the holiday season, here are some gifts I'd like to give. I'd actually bestow them all had I omnipotent power. But obviously I don't. So these gifts are wishful thinking rather than material. But if you can't be wishful at this time of year, when can you be?

To the men and women serving in the U.S. armed forces and all foreign militaries who find themselves in harm's way in Iraq and everywhere else in the world: May you enjoy the gift of returning home safely without undue physical or mental injury and may you believe that you haven't served in vain;

To the poor, hungry and destitute in Orange County and everywhere else in this state, country and throughout the world: May you have the gift of courage, the strength of will, and the hope to survive your material challenges and find the means to satisfy your basic needs for food and adequate shelter;

To all those victims of the recent firestorms in Southern California who've lost their homes and possessions: May you have the gift of a swift recovery in rebuilding your homes and may you become stronger in your resiliency;

To all those suffering from mental and emotional disorders of any type: May you have the gift of finding mental health and well-being and overcoming your suffering through the best available treatment;

To all those struggling with existential issues, who are searching for meaning and purpose in their lives: May you find the answers you are seeking;

To all the young and bewildered celebrities who have demonstrated through reckless and self-destructive behavior that you're lost and are crying out for help: May you have the gift of finding one clear-thinking friend, parent, or therapist who can steer you in the right direction. Someone who is not a sycophant and who will not be afraid to tell you honestly what you need to do to help yourself. And the real gift will be that you will actually listen to this person, follow the advice, and change before you do yourself in;

To all who imagine that if you only had more money and material possessions, life would be more exciting and wonderful: May you have the gift of finding just as deep a self-esteem and contentment in your life as if you had the money you're wishing for;

To all who are compulsively repeating past behavior that once made sense in coping with childhood trauma but is no longer appropriate: May you find the gift of getting off the repetition-compulsion merry-go-round and learning new behaviors that will help you face your life as it is today;

To all who are obsessed with past emotional injuries and resentments: May you find the gift of freeing yourself from your past so that you may drop petty resentments that only reinforce and prolong your misery;

To all who are afraid of emotional and physical intimacy: May you find the gift of losing your fear so that you may know what it's like to merge with another;

To all who are highly competitive and perfectionistic, whose egos are never satisfied with their accomplishments: May you have the gift of knowing what it's like to feel satisfied with your "good-enough" performance;

And to all the adolescents, teenagers and young adults who are in a hurry to grow up, may you have the gift of realizing your life is actually much shorter than you think: May you learn to slow down and relish the gradual process of physical, mental, and emotional maturation, remembering that while you're only young once, you can be immature forever.