

# THAT CHRISTMAS WISH LIST

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

It is almost here, Christmas and all of the excitement that its tradition brings. The carols, the decorations, the Christmas shopping, the turkey, the family reunions, and, did I omit to mention the Christmas shopping? To tell you the truth I am almost dizzy with all the end of year functions we have been attending over the last few weeks. I have had to constantly keep ahead of myself in buying enough little gifts to cover all the present swapping sessions, and bake enough food for the potluck lunches. I can tell that I have attended quite a few of these events because my clothes are shrinking!

Anyway, getting back to the topic in hand. The Christmas wish list probably started off as just that - a list of an individual's choice gift ideas for the family to choose from. Somewhere between that idea and the here and now, this list has become a 'promise to buy everything on it' list. The cost involved in trying to fulfill these wishes, (Or, could that be demands?), puts such a strain on the family budget that many folks take all year to clear their credit card debt from the previous season. Advertising does not help matters either. It suggests that people 'think big' in their buying.

One advert I saw showed a little girl being given a whole new wardrobe just because she had been wearing a school uniform for the last five years. Another advert showed a father being given a whole new set of tools – I mean everything you can imagine, just because he had been such a great maintenance man and 'deserved' it. People, we need to get some perspective here. Are we going to be sucked into the major chain stores' need for financial survival, or greed? Are we going to give one another what is far more valuable; something that costs little, but seems to have been lost in the gift giving frenzy – that of love and togetherness? In the South Pacific it is summer at Christmas time and traditionally, almost the whole country shuts down as everyone goes to the beach, or to other vacation locations. It is quite the family season with swimming, boating, picnicking, traveling, hiking, and playing together being the order of the day.

You have to admit that after the pile of Christmas paper has been trashed, and the toys have been played with for a few days, the newness wears off and kids are looking for something else – you! We have found over and over, that although kids say they want stuff, they really want quality time with parents. We were cured of automatic gift giving when we first arrived in the U.S. and for reasons beyond ourselves, ended up with no money. We went without any Christmas gifts for several years and it was only then that we realized how futile the whole exercise is. Instead, we found the value of friends and family and just hanging out together. Even now we don't buy ourselves gifts just for the sake of it.

My suggestion is to scrub the wish list altogether. Give two or three gifts to each of your kids and work out some fun outings instead. Kids will always remember the 'family togetherness' times, way beyond any gifts on a wish list. You will have a much happier Christmas, too, not having to worry about the January credit card bill.

Here is another radical idea. Instead of buying yourselves gifts, why not find others who may have no money for gifts, and give your 'gift money' to them. Start a new Christmas tradition for your family.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at [sally@forefrontfamilies.org](mailto:sally@forefrontfamilies.org). We invite you to also check out our website at [www.forefrontfamilies.org](http://www.forefrontfamilies.org) and our blog site at [www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com](http://www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com) for further assistance.