

Ahhh...mazing Holiday Gifts

Thrifty gift ideas to soothe stress

So, you've made your list, checked it twice, but still don't know what to get for your friend, Peggy? Between a rocky relationship and late nights at work, you know the last few months have been stressful for her. A soothing gift may be just the ticket – especially during a busy holiday season. Read on for some ideas to relieve her stress and yours when gift-giving.

Thrifty Yet Thoughtful

During the holidays, it's easy to feel pressured into spending more than you wanted to on a gift. Ads hint that the amount we spend on a gift is a measure of how much we care about someone. And sometimes, we feel the need to reciprocate after receiving a pricey gift.

But overspending can cause stress. Before you treat your friend to a seaweed wrap at that new spa, consider this: a gift doesn't have to cost a lot of money to be meaningful. In fact, of the best gifts you've received, chances are it's the handmade ones that still floor you. The cozy blanket your mom spent hours knitting. The vibrant hand-painted teacup from your sister. You can find scores of tutorials online for do-it-yourself gifts for stress relief – from scented eye pillows to fabric heating pads. (Try searching for “DIY spa” or “handmade spa.”)

Pressed for time? Skip the long lines and crowds and buy these affordable stress relievers online instead:

- Herbal teas with a unique mug
- Colorful flower pot with seed packet
- Wooden massager with massage oil
- Eyemask, lavender oil and candles
- Bubblebath and bath puff
- Plush blanket
- Mandala coloring book and crayons
- Anti-stress neck pillow
- Meditation cushion
- Gratitude journal
- Trio of funny videos and popcorn
- Pedometer
- Lava lamp
- Mini tabletop fountain
- Annual pass to a national park
- Oil painting set
- Meditation, t'ai chi or yoga video
- Flannel sheets
- Book of local walking trails
- Silk slippers
- Plush bath robe
- Yoga mat

A site such as Etsy (www.etsy.com), a trove of one-of-a-kind handmade gifts, may be a good place to start. You may also be able to find online deals through websites such as Retail Me Not (www.retailmenot.com).



A Priceless Gift

One of the best gifts you can give someone is your time. Does your friend love the ocean? Pack a picnic and explore a hidden beach together. Does she rarely eat out? Give her a break from cooking by whipping up her favorite meal. Is she adventurous? Take a spontaneous road trip to an outdoor hot springs.

Bottom line: if your friend has been stressed, chances are she will enjoy time together or a gift that helps her relax. But keep your perspective when it comes to gift-giving. Searching for that perfect – and often pricey – gift may only create stress for you.

This article is for informational and self-help purposes only. It should not be treated as a substitute for financial, medical, psychiatric, psychological or behavioral health care advice, or as a substitute for consultation with a qualified professional.

Need help?

Worn down by holiday stress? Need help creating a budget for holiday gift-giving? Your EAP can help.

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TDD: (800) 327-0801

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