Our 2017 Holiday Gift Guide
Top Eco-Friendly Picks from Deirdre Imus

Autism & Acetaminophen
Is there a link?

Herd Immunity
Dr. James Lyons-Weiler Separates Fact from Fiction
As we get older and our kids get older, the holidays take on different meaning. We are all so scattered each day at various jobs, schools, extracurricular activities, and other appointments that it can be difficult to spend quality time together. Sleeping under the same roof as your loved ones each night does not equal instant connection. We must try even harder these days to look each other in the eye, talk about what matters, and forge meaningful relationships.

The holiday season offers the opportunity to spend time together, create lasting memories, continue family traditions, and invent some of your own. It is easy for us all—but especially for children—to get caught up in the hoopla of presents and parties and decorations and songs. But at the core of all of this season’s festivities is our loved ones—family, friends, and anyone else you’ve let into your world. Whether you tell them how much they mean to you daily, weekly, or monthly—and especially if you don’t say it enough—a great way to show your affection and to say thank you is with a gift.

Don’t “Settle” When It Comes to Gift-Giving
And there is no greater gift to give than something sustainable, eco-friendly, locally made, homemade, secondhand, or completely intangible. We should think about what we give to others just as carefully as what we give ourselves. If you wouldn’t buy yourself a cheaply-made item manufactured overseas and probably laden with toxic chemicals, then maybe don’t bestow it on a friend or family member (unless maybe you don’t like them very much, but even then, it’s still pretty rude!).

Perhaps a more daunting question than WHO should get a gift is WHAT on earth to get them. Rather than settle for that most impersonal of presents—a gift card—consider some of my favorite things this year for people of all sizes. Let the holidays make you crazy for other reasons (what to cook, how to avoid your weird uncle, who to invite to your party), and spend the time you’ve saved not worrying about gifts on snuggling the ones you love.
Here are some of my Favorite Gifts for Families this holiday season. Some are big, some are small, and some can’t be touched at all. Most are from a handful of websites I feel responsibly source the items they sell, and have a wide variety of interesting products made largely by independent artists. It’s almost as if you’ve wandered into a local crafts fair, but on the internet. (Also, go wander into a local crafts fair! It’s a great activity for kids, and an even better place to shop for holiday gifts.)

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX
I’ve written before about the website Uncommon Goods, an online retailer that minimizes its environmental impact by working with artists who use sustainable or recycled materials, and choosing eco-friendly packaging materials. I strongly recommend checking them out for interesting, one-of-a-kind gifts that you simply will not find at larger online retailers or big box stores. They sell the kinds of things people are actually happy to receive, and will hold on to for a long time.

**My favorite presents for kids include:**

1. **Dinosaur Duvet and Pillowcase Set.** What kid wouldn’t want to sleep inside a dinosaur’s mouth? This snuggly duvet cover and matching pillowcase let your little one snooze inside the gaping, toothy jaw of a T-Rex all night long. As any parent knows, half the battle of getting your kids to bed at night is convincing them to stay in bed. Crawling into bed with a dinosaur could provide excellent motivation at bedtime, and you can sleep easy knowing this duvet is made from 100% cotton, and nothing else.

2. **Personalized Good Night Little Me Book.** Make any little one feel special with their very own bedtime tale! Even the smallest of babies delights in hearing their name over and over again, and older kids will love looking at the beautiful illustrations—and hearing their name over and over again! They somehow never tire of anything that is all about them.

3. **Little Bites Silicone Ice Pop Molds.** The weather might be getting colder, but ice pops are a year-round treat! Blend together a wide range of healthy fruits with some yogurt—and maybe even a veggie or two!—for a healthy snack that couldn’t be more fun to eat. Let your little one help create the ice pop of their dreams in these colorful molds made with lots of character and zero harmful chemicals.

4. **Gummy Bear Light.** They’re cute, colorful, and provide just the right amount of light—but not too much—to create a soothing yet buoyant atmosphere in any child’s room. Plus, who doesn’t love a bear?
**The Mug with A Hoop.** This aptly-named mug is perfect for kids because it was made by one. A young entrepreneur by the name of Max designed it—along with other similar mugs—when he was just eight years old. His specially-designed mugs will raise your child’s awareness for healthy soups and breakfast cereals, as well as for dyslexia, a cause close to Max’s heart.

**Little Patient.** Take playing doctor to all new levels! Your aspiring physician or surgeon will love this plush character, which opens up to reveal similarly soft organs, each one labeled for proper replacement. It’s a great way to teach kids about the magical human body and the importance of taking care of it. The Little Patient can also help demystify surgical procedures for any child who has to undergo an operation.

**PACT Longline Pullover Hoodie.** Does your teen live in sweats? Check out this comfy hooded sweatshirt, made from 60 percent organic cotton and 40 percent recycled polyester. It’s chic, sustainable, and fair trade, but I can’t promise it’ll make them think their parents are cool.

**ALL IN THE FAMILY**
You can never be too young to indulge in lavish textiles, which will make any newborn and new parent very happy—not to mention comfortable. The whole family can enjoy the comforts offered at Boll and Branch, which was founded in 2014 by two parents who decided the bedding industry needed to change. They responsibly source their materials, and trace the origin of the cotton so that families know what they’re buying is authentic, pure, and chemical-free.

**Check out the following irresistible items:**
- **Cable Knit Throw,** made from Fair Trade™ Certified cotton and with 100 percent organic, nontoxic, eco-friendly dyes
- Any of their organic sheets and duvet covers
- **Men’s and Women’s Flannel Pajamas,** which are made ethically in Portugal from organic cotton

**COZY COMFORT —** These timeless and elegant throws use 100% organic dyes.

**PLAYING DOCTOR —** “Little Patient” offers a fun way for kids to learn about the body and can help demystify surgical procedures.
• These super soft Crib Sheets contain zero chemicals and will help parents sleep easily at night knowing their little one isn’t breathing in harsh chemicals and dyes.
• Swaddle baby in pure organic cotton in this dreamy Baby Blanket, or make things easier and opt for the Baby Gift Set, which includes two crib sheets and a blanket!

It’s never too early to keep your baby safe, and the folks over at Belly Armor are doing some very innovative work when it comes to radiation protection. They offer a wide range of products—such as blankets, belly bands, and even boxer-briefs for men—designed to prevent or limit radiation exposure. This area of science is still evolving and we learn more everyday about the health risks that may stem from radiation, particularly in babies and children. You can never be too careful, and Belly Armor is trying to help.

BACK TO BASICS
As always, when possible, buy local! Supporting local businesses and artists has never been easier. Check out Etsy.com for craftspeople in your area, and support them. Many artisans selling their creations on Etsy are using recycled, upcycled, handmade, or secondhand materials, which is about as sustainable as it gets. Making something new and beautiful from something old and forgotten is a skill that should be cherished, admired, and rewarded.

For other fair trade, handmade gifts look at the website Serrv, a nonprofit that has partnered with artisans and farmers around the world to help them sell their unique product collections—everything from home décor to clothing to specialty foods, and more.

You’ll never go wrong with a seasonal bouquet or gift basket from Organic Bouquet, which uses sustainably grown flowers delivered in biodegradable packaging. They’re a mission-based company involved in community projects around the globe.

Experiential gifts are also a treat, whether you surprise a friend or family member with theatre tickets, a cooking class, pottery instruction, a spa day, or an opportunity to jump out of a plane. The memories made will pay dividends and it’s an excuse to take a break from the regular routine of each day and do something different.

Try to keep things in perspective, put family first, and avoid stressing out over the silly stuff. Find wonder in the pure joy children feel opening up gifts, and guide them on the importance of giving back.

Note: Information provided herein is not intended to treat or diagnose any health condition. As always, consult your healthcare provider with any questions or health concerns.