

Wellbeing Insights



ECO-FRIENDLY FEATURE

DIY Eco-Friendly Holiday Gifts: Sustainable Giving for a Joyful Season

As the holiday season draws near, the search for the perfect gift can often overshadow the impact our choices have on the environment. Mass-produced products, excess packaging, and single-use wrapping have all become hallmarks of traditional gift-giving, yet there is a growing movement toward more meaningful, sustainable presents. DIY eco-friendly gifts not only reduce waste and environmental harm but also capture the heartfelt spirit of the holidays. Whether you're crafting for family, friends, or colleagues, these ideas and tips will help you spread cheer while protecting the planet.

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DIY Eco-Friendly Holiday Gifts: Sustainable Giving for a Joyful Season

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Why Choose DIY Eco-Friendly Gifts?

Handmade gifts have always carried a sense of thoughtfulness and care. Using recycled, natural, or upcycled materials shows extra consideration for the environment. Eco-friendly gifts also encourage recipients to adopt kinder practices, creating a ripple effect of sustainability long after the holidays are over.

1. *Homemade Beeswax Wraps*

Plastic food wrap is a kitchen staple, but it's also a significant pollutant. Beeswax wraps — created by infusing cotton fabric with beeswax, tree resin, and jojoba oil — offer a reusable, biodegradable alternative. Cut cotton into squares, melt beeswax (with a bit of oil and resin for stickiness) onto the fabric, then bake until absorbed. These wraps are perfect for sandwich storage, covering bowls, or keeping produce fresh. Bundle several and tie with twine or fabric ribbon for a practical, planet-friendly gift.

2. *Upcycled Jars of Homemade Goodies*

Empty jam, pasta sauce, or mason jars can easily be given new life as charming containers for homemade treats. Fill them with holiday cookies, spiced nuts, or granola, then dress them up with scraps of fabric, old ribbon, or a sprig of rosemary for a seasonal touch. This reduces packaging waste and personalizes your gift beyond store-bought items. Add a handwritten label or recipe tag for an extra thoughtful detail.

3. *Natural Handmade Soaps*

Soap-making is a fulfilling, customizable project that results in a useful, everyday gift. Start with a plant-based melt-and-pour soap base (available at craft stores) and mix in natural colorants such as spirulina, cocoa, or turmeric, as well as essential oils for scent. Pour the mixture into molds — silicone baking molds work well — then wrap your finished soaps in paper or leftover fabric. This eliminates plastic packaging and allows full control over the ingredients, which is ideal for friends and family with sensitive skin or those who appreciate all-natural products.

4. *Herb Sachets and Potpourri*

Herbal sachets are a zero-waste, aromatic gift that can be made using dried herbs and flowers — like lavender, rosemary, or rose petals, combined with cloves or cinnamon sticks. Sew small pouches from old clothes or fabric scraps, fill and close with a drawstring or hand-stitch. These sachets are perfect for keeping drawers fresh and can last for months. Alternatively, blend dried ingredients to create a potpourri mix and package it in reusable glass jars.

5. *Repurposed Sweater Mittens*

Old wool sweaters that are no longer wearable or slightly out of style can be transformed into cozy, unique mittens. Find a pattern online or trace around your own hand (with a half-inch seam allowance) to create a template. Cut two pieces for each mitten, stitch them together, and finish the seams. Personalized touches like embroidery, buttons, or felt patches make them even more special. Not only does this keep textiles out of landfills, but the end result is a one-of-a-kind, functional gift.

6. *Personalized Reusable Tote Bags*

Reusable bags are a great everyday eco-friendly staple. Buy plain cotton totes and personalize them with fabric paint, hand-stamping, or iron-on patches. Decorate with holiday greetings, favorite quotes, or artwork. These totes reduce plastic bag use and are handy for running errands or carrying groceries year-round.

Eco-Friendly Wrapping Ideas

Reduce waste by using alternative wrapping methods, like:

- Fabric squares or scarves
- Festive cloth placemats
- Newspaper, brown paper bags, or old maps
- Twine, pinecones, cinnamon sticks, or dried orange slices
- Baskets, jars, or tins

Choosing to give DIY eco-friendly gifts is a meaningful way to show loved ones you care about them and a greener future. These gifts are unique and heartfelt, reflecting the spirit of giving back to Earth. This holiday season, let your creativity shine while making a positive impact — one handmade, thoughtful gift at a time.





PARENTING CORNER

5 Family Rules to Bring Peace to Screen Time

Because technology is part of daily life, setting thoughtful boundaries and making informed family decisions is more important than ever.

Left to their own devices, most kids would choose screens over almost anything else. But unstructured screen time can limit the critical development that comes from play, imagination, and real-world interaction. Being intentional about technology use gives you the chance to reflect on your family's shared values and meet each child's individual needs.

1. Make a screen time plan for each child.

Every child differs by age, interests, and personality. Pay attention to how your child reacts when screens go off. If it's always a battle, that may be a sign they need less screen time or a clearer routine.

2. Be clear about what screen time includes.

Not all screen time is created equal! Talk about the kinds of screens and activities that are allowed and when — whether that's educational apps, family movies, or video games. Clear communication keeps things consistent and reduces confusion (and arguments).

3. Set consistent screen time windows.

Having designated times when screens are allowed helps manage expectations and brings structure to the day. When kids know what to expect, transitions become easier.

4. Create a family screen time motto.

Try a simple phrase to help everyone remember your family's priorities:

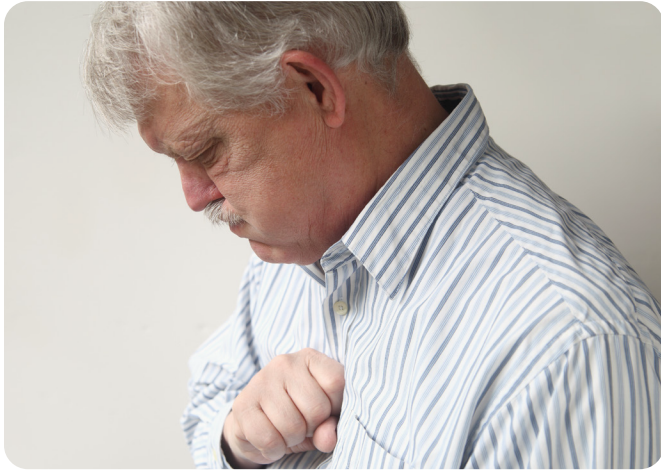
- "People first."
- "Screens rest — we play best."
- "Connection starts face to face."

5. Encourage screen-free joy.

It may take a little extra planning, but helping your kids discover activities they love without screens is worth it. Building forts, drawing, biking, or baking together creates lasting memories — and a needed digital break.

Remember, bumps and resistance are normal. By setting and upholding these boundaries, you're teaching your children one of the most important modern skills: how to use technology with balance and intention.

Heartburn and Indigestion 101



Most people have experienced digestive discomfort at some point, whether it's a burning sensation in the chest after a heavy dinner or a bloated, unsettled feeling that lingers long after a meal. These symptoms are common signs of heartburn or indigestion, two of the most frequent digestive issues. While symptoms may overlap, their causes and sensations differ, and recognizing the distinction can help you find relief.

Heartburn, despite its name, has nothing to do with the heart. It occurs when stomach acid flows backward into the esophagus, the tube that carries food from the mouth to the stomach. A muscle at the bottom of the esophagus, called the lower esophageal sphincter, normally acts as a one-way valve. If it relaxes at the wrong time or doesn't close properly, acid escapes upward. The esophagus isn't built to withstand stomach acid, so irritation occurs, resulting in the telltale burning feeling in the chest or throat. This sensation often worsens after eating a large meal, bending forward, or lying down too soon after eating. While occasional episodes aren't unusual, heartburn that happens more than twice a week may be a sign of gastroesophageal reflux disease, or GERD.

Indigestion, also called dyspepsia, is a broader term for discomfort in the upper abdomen. Unlike heartburn, it isn't solely linked to acid reflux and may involve a variety of digestive processes. People often describe it as bloating, nausea, belching, a sour taste in the mouth, or the sensation of being overly full even after eating a small amount. Indigestion can result from eating habits or other issues such as ulcers, gallbladder complications, or food intolerance.

Although heartburn and indigestion differ, they share many common triggers:

- Eating large meals or eating too quickly
- Spicy, fried, or fatty foods
- Chocolate, caffeine, or alcohol
- Carbonated beverages
- Lying down soon after eating
- Stress or anxiety

Medications may also contribute. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs can irritate the stomach, while others relax the esophageal sphincter, increasing the chance of acid reflux.

Occasional heartburn or indigestion usually isn't a cause for concern. However, when these symptoms occur regularly, they can interfere with sleep, disrupt daily life, and lead people to avoid certain foods they once enjoyed. Over time, repeated acid reflux can even damage the lining of the esophagus, which is why frequent discomfort should not be ignored.

Medical attention is recommended if symptoms happen more than a couple of times a week or if they are accompanied by warning signs such as:

- Difficulty swallowing or persistent pain
- Unexplained weight loss
- Vomiting blood or passing black, tarry stools
- Chest pain that radiates to the arm, jaw, or back

These could signal more serious conditions requiring prompt treatment. Also, frequent use of antacids is another reason to talk with a healthcare provider.

Digestive discomfort, such as heartburn and indigestion, is common, but it doesn't have to disrupt daily life. By paying attention to your body's signals and making simple adjustments, you can often find relief and improve overall digestive health. Remember, persistent or severe symptoms need professional attention, as timely guidance can ease discomfort and support your wellbeing.

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Heartburn and Indigestion 101

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Everyday Tips to Soothe Digestive Discomfort

If you occasionally experience heartburn or indigestion, adopting a few simple habits can often help keep discomfort at bay. Try these strategies for better digestive health:

1. *Eat Smaller, Slower Meals*

Large portions put extra pressure on the stomach. Eat slowly to give your body time to recognize fullness and reduce the risk of reflux.

2. *Stay Upright After Eating*

Wait two to three hours before lying down, or elevate the head of your bed to prevent nighttime symptoms.

3. *Limit Your Triggers*

Common triggers include fried foods, caffeine, alcohol, chocolate, and carbonated drinks. Pay attention to what bothers you and adjust accordingly.

4. *Sip Soothing Drinks*

Try ginger tea for nausea or warm water with lemon to gently stimulate digestion.

5. *Manage Stress*

Practice deep breathing, mindful stretching, or take short walks after meals to help calm your digestive system.

6. *Don't Smoke*

Smoking relaxes the esophageal sphincter and can worsen both heartburn and indigestion.

7. *Wear Loose Clothing*

Tight waistbands or belts can put pressure on the stomach and aggravate symptoms.

While these adjustments are often used to ease mild symptoms, frequent or severe digestive discomfort may signal a more serious condition. If symptoms persist, consult a healthcare professional.



Prioritizing Your Savings Goals



Getting your financial goals in order can feel overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be stressful. With so many competing priorities, such as your bills, debt, and saving for the future, it's easy to feel unsure of where to start. The good news is you can take it one step at a time. By focusing on what matters most and making intentional choices, you can create a plan that fits your life, values, and overall wellbeing.

Start by thinking about what matters most to you so that your values guide your financial choices. Your top priorities might include family time, long-term financial security, or travel experiences. You may also have hobbies or other extras that bring you joy. It's fine to enjoy the things you love, as long as they don't take priority over essential goals.

Next, consider both short-term and long-term goals. Short-term goals may include building an emergency fund, paying off debt, or saving for a vacation. Long-term goals could be buying a home, funding education, or saving for retirement. You can save for multiple goals at the same time, but make sure your top priorities, such as your emergency fund or retirement, are funded first. Also, breaking your goals into smaller, manageable pieces makes it easier to decide which goals to focus on and stay motivated.

One of the easiest ways to reach your goals is to make saving automatic. Setting up a direct deposit into your savings or investment accounts ensures that your most important goals are funded first. If your employer offers a 401(k) or similar plan with an automatic savings feature, take advantage of it, especially if there's a match. Automatic saving removes the temptation to spend money elsewhere and helps you build financial confidence over time.

Finally, turn your goals into action. Write them down, set target dates, and review your progress regularly. Adjust priorities as life changes to stay on track. Your financial wellbeing is one part of your overall wellness, and prioritizing your savings goals is about **making intentional choices** that build confidence and peace of mind, one step at a time.

Key Actions to Prioritize Savings Goals

- Focus on what matters most
- Set short- and long-term goals
- Automate your savings
- Write it down

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