

Senior Advice: Give gifts of love to faraway parents

by *Doug_Mayberry*

Q: As the calendar reminds us, we are rapidly approaching the holidays, and we have a gift problem. We would like to be with our distant parents but cannot afford to travel this year. Our parents are still in good health, always emotionally supportive and don't ask us for anything. In a word, they are wonderful.

Our children are still young but miss their grandparents, too. What kind of gifts can we send to show our love and thanks for what they have done for us?

A: Parents understand that you are as busy with your family as they were when they were raising you. They also know that the ongoing lessening of your needs from them coincides with their increasing emotional needs from you.

The best gift is extra attention, especially during the holidays. The gift of time is something only you can give. Even if you are far away, you can do this by means of multiple phone calls, cards and e-mail. If your parents don't have a computer, consider purchasing an inexpensive model with which they can keep in touch on a daily basis.

Could you make a photo album that would create great memories and also bring them up to date about school and other activities in which your family members are involved? Help your children write a poem or make a drawing (maybe signed with an "X" and "O"), which would be a big winner. I don't know any grandparents who don't treasure their grandchildren's artistic endeavors.

Love and attention are the goals. Stuff can be bought, but emotional gifts are more meaningful as these best express how much you care. A personal letter thanking your parents for the gift of their love, always being there for you, the laughter and happiness you shared and other beliefs you cherish could bring them tears of happiness.

Memories are not ordinary things to those who have experienced them. It's not about the stuff, but your love, the good times, and sharing and coping together as a loving family.

Q: With all the media hype about the decline of our dollar, we feel like we are going down the financial tube. We paid attention to saving for our retirement, which we are now in, and felt comfortable about our future. Now, we're not as confident. What do you see as our reality?

A: Many of us feel our political leaders have mismanaged our resources and political policies, as well. There are also those who believe there are no solutions, and as individual voters we cannot do anything about it. Polls would show we are divided about 50/50 on almost all issues. Intelligent consensus seems to be impossible. The frustrations of having been the world's strongest and watching the dollar fade as the most desirable currency frightens us.

In the simplest terms, when inflation goes up our dollar value goes down. As the Fed slashes interest rates, it slows down our country's growth. Everyone who has traveled internationally has found it difficult to believe our dollar buys so little. Even the cost of a turkey dinner is up.

Also raising its ugly head is the fear of the current rapidly declining value of real estate. We have been counting on our profits to steer us through any major emergencies that might arise.

Yet seniors, many of whom went through the Depression era, are probably best equipped to manage the "new economy." You know more than you think about managing money. Relax, stay calm and laugh a little. Remember that changes are inevitable, and we are still lucky to live in this wonderful country.

Doug Mayberry lives in a retirement community in Southern California. Send your questions to him at deardoug@msn.com or write to him at P.O. Box 2649, Carlsbad, CA 92018.

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