

# Presents Here, Presents There, Presents Hidden Everywhere

By Judi Jerome, LICSW, LADC



I like to pick up presents for people when they catch my eye, no matter what the time of year. From what I've been told, many people shop for holidays, birthdays, and special occasions in this manner. Remembering where you put the presents, what and whom each is for, or even that you bought them in the first place is quite a challenge.

Yesterday I went to The Christmas Shop to buy tea (OK that sounds really strange!). I overheard two women speaking about buying someone both a Fathers Day present and a birthday present for next November. I wonder where she is going to store that birthday present. Will she hide it so well that *even she* won't be able to find it? How will she remember where she hid it? And what about the

households that have curious children in them; parents have to be creative in hiding birthday or holiday gifts. Creative can be chaotic.

How many times have we duplicated gifts, books, CD's, DVD's, or cards because we didn't remember buying them already or we just can't find them? How many people have a system in place that is quick and easy enough to remedy this situation? The sock drawer can only hold just so much. Well, pray for rain, grab those index cards, dig out a notepad or laptop computer and let's get to work.

Putting a system in place will in part depend on whether or not you have to put the presents high up in a closet or locked cabinet, or in a visible place. The large, clear stackable containers come as a whole set on wheels, or separately to put onto a closet shelf. Please measure the height and width of the shelves or space where you will keep the containers before you buy them. Be creative in labeling the outside of the containers. Holiday, person or nature of the gifts, etc., is just a few suggestions for labels. Masking tape, mailing labels, or a fun and practical label maker can be used to label the container.

Some people are hesitant about actually wrapping the gift and writing the persons name on it before storing it. After all, what happens if you find something better and decide to give that gift to someone else? Christmas paper on a birthday present wouldn't be very practical. When you are waiting in line at the cash register, take a pencil and write the person's name and the occasion for which it is intended on the price tag. If you end up changing who you decide to give it to, storing it unwrapped or returning it, the name is visible and can be erased. Wrapped or unwrapped the gift needs to be labeled and put into the storage bin as soon as you get home.

Here is where the index cards and notepad or laptop comes into play. Keeping a list of what you bought, who it is for, and which container it's in is important. The index card goes into the front of each container and is helpful to remind you of what is inside the wrapped gifts and who gets what. Either erase or cross it off the card when you take it out to give away. The master list keeps you from having to open up

each storage bin and read each index card before finding a particular gift or remembering if you already bought something for someone. If you have a PDA, you can hot-sync your list to/from the computer and have it with you wherever you go; after all, not all shopping trips are planned. The PDA *definitely* reduces 'brain strain' when staring at a potential gift in the store and thinking it may seem familiar but you're just not sure. Organizing your gift stashing can save both time and money. After all, making your life easier when special occasions and holidays arrive is why you bought the presents ahead of time in the first place.

I have a drawer in my desk that has envelopes with all of the loose 'advance' cards I have bought, (gotta love that Current catalogue!) One envelope for each type, i.e. birthday, 'missing you', Valentines Day, Thank You cards, etc. Because the cards stick up above the envelopes I can easily look through them to pick one out. I also keep the boxes of holiday cards that I buy on sale every year in January in that same drawer. Some people may prefer to use a file cabinet for their cards.

### **A TIP...**

The rainy days are for making a list of ALL your CD's, DVD's, audio and video tapes, and books to prevent and give away duplicates. It also may be time to give away some of those unused, long forgotten great old books or tapes. It is amazing how many potential presents are hiding in your library and media collection. I have a vast (putting it mildly) library of movies and concerts that I've taped from the TV over the past 20 years. Each VHS tape (with 3-4 movies on each) and now DVD has a number on it as well as the name of the movies visible on each one. My master list has the number and name of the movies. I also have a list of CD's. As soon as I buy or burn a CD or DVD I add it to my list. Doing it on the computer allows for it to be perpetually alphabetized. When a friend comes over and asks if I have "The Way We Were" or a particular Beatles record/tape/CD, I pull out my list and know if I have it and just where to find it. I also use this list to record over movies that I haven't watched in eons and can't remember why I ever liked it enough to tape it in the first place. For my most recent 'spare time' project I have been slowly (very slowly) copying the movies that I am choosing to keep from the VHS tapes to DVD's and storing them in a sleeve notebook to save a ton of space.

### **AND A CONFESSION...**

I recently had company for a whole week, and used many more towels than I would normally empty out of my linen closet. As I pulled out the last towel, a book fell out onto the floor. It was a present for my friend's daughter that I thought I'd mailed out months ago. Don't ask me how it got there because I haven't a clue. *WELL*, maybe a little clue; the linen closet is where I have my organized stash of presents. Unfortunately this one never made it through the system. Mindfulness does matter!



*Judi has been in private practice since 1990 working with a variety of issues, and specializing in teens and adults with AD/HD and co-morbid disorders, life cycle transitions, and substance abuse. Judi enjoys coaching teens and adults with AD/HD in all genres of life. She believes that each individual has potential within to achieve success beyond the current limits that problems such as time management, disorganization, morning madness and late night hyper-focusing may be imposing on their lives. Judi coaches people toward accomplishing their dreams as well as their goals. Her motto - Empowerment, growth and maintenance for positive life changes.*

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