



The Do's and Don'ts of Holiday Gift Giving after Betrayal (For Addicts)

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If you are a sex addict and trying to figure out what to do about gifts for your betrayed partner this holiday season, this blog is for you. Should you give a gift? What do you give that is unlikely to trigger your partner? When do you give it? How do you give it?

Get a gift! If the pressure of gift giving is leading you to consider skipping gift giving all together, think again. You may not want to get a gift because you want to avoid the possibility that your partner will be upset by your gift. Yet this solution to not get any gift is likely to cause additional pain to your partner. Giving a gift is a chance to demonstrate your commitment to and consideration for your partner. It is a chance to show your love, which is much more powerful than words after betrayals.

Don't go overboard. Getting gifts is important but if you shower your partner with way more gifts than you typically give, that may also be triggering (unless you are positive your partner would appreciate it). Going overboard with gift giving may be interpreted by your partner as something you are doing out of guilt, which can become a triggering reminder. Gift-giving cannot make up for past betrayals and you do not want your partner to think that is what you are trying to do.

Don't give a sexual gift. It doesn't matter what your intention is, if you give a sexual gift that will be a trigger to past betrayal (e.g., lingerie or sex toys). Addicts have tried to justify this by explaining their intentions, but, this is NEVER a good idea!

Give something thoughtful. To show your love for your partner try to think of something to give that would be meaningful to her but not at all related to past betrayal or pain. Start to pay attention to things your partner reports liking, wanting, or needing. If you still aren't sure, here are some ideas: choose a gift related to your partner's hobbies, tickets to something she would like (without pressure to take you with her), a gift card to her favorite place, or a gift that is related to a passion or new aspiration of your partner.

Respect her boundaries. If you are separated, make sure to respect all of her boundaries even when planning gift giving. For example, do not leave something in or outside of her home, if

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she doesn't want you there. If she has asked you to not speak to her, don't. You could give her a gift when you already would be seeing her or you could mail it. She will likely be triggered from the gift if you are breaking her boundaries when giving it to her.

Do not make your children deliver gifts. Children should never be put in a position to be deliver things or messages between parents and especially not for gifts. If separated from your partner, having your kids deliver gifts can be manipulative because kids could interpret the addict to be the person trying to reconcile and the partner as the one keeping it from happening (which is not fair because your addiction is the true reason you aren't together).

Gift giving for holidays can be complicated but don't give up! It is a great opportunity to show that you are focused on your partner and committed to your relationship. You can show her that you are growing in your ability to care for her needs and her heart.