

# It's the Thought That Counts ...?

Some spot-on advice for gift-giving.

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## Style Wise: Expressing Your Unique Self

**My** father was an amazing gift-giver. He put a lot of himself into the process of finding a gift that would make the recipient's heart sing with joy. He somehow managed to always hit it out of the park when it came to gifts for my birthday or Christmas.

When I asked him what his secret was, he said he would tune in quickly if he heard someone say, "Oh, I'd love to have." or "I really need a ..." or "I wish I could find ..."

He struggled, though, after I had breast surgery and my body changed. The man who routinely gave me T-shirts with funny sayings began to give me books, jewelry or kitchen gadgets. Don't get me wrong; those gifts were still perfectly on point with what I love. But, when we laughed over a T-shirt we saw, he awkwardly shared that he'd avoided gifts of clothing since my surgery because he was no longer sure of my size, wondered if some fabrics were uncomfortable, and — most tellingly — was concerned that anything putting the focus on my chest, as the T-shirts did, made me uncomfortable.

Dressing comfortably and fashionably after body-altering surgery or to

accommodate other issues that affect dressing, such as autism or dementia, is not an easy transition for the one experiencing the change. Neither is it easy for the people who love them, the gift-givers who want to express their care in a tangible way. Do we have any advice for those of us who don't want to abandon our tradition of spot-on gift-giving?

Why, yes we do.

### Shifting the Gifting Perspective

While your immediate reaction may be to avoid the change altogether and gift other items that the recipient enjoys, like how my father switched to books, might I suggest tempering that reaction?

More often than not, part of the joy of giving someone a gift is the surprise factor. The giver often gets as much joy from surprising the recipient as the receiver gets from the gift itself. However, for folks who need adaptive clothing, accessories or other devices, surprises aren't always fun, especially if it results in an awkward conversation later that goes along the lines of, "I love the blouse you gave me, Aunt Dorothy, but I can't handle the buttons. Do you mind if I exchange it?"

Our suggestion is to shift your perspective on gift-giving. Let go of the desire — or need — to surprise someone. Instead, talk to the recipient or someone close to him or her, to find out more about what they can or cannot use. For example, I just recently learned that people with autism often end up wearing clothes backward or inside-out because they have difficulty determining right from left, forward from backward, etc. They also may have trouble with zippers, buttons and other fasteners that require fine motor skills. Folks with dementia often face the same challenges.

I'm a born-and-bred Southern woman, and gift-giving is an art form down here. Accept the challenge. Before shopping for the perfect winter coat for someone you love, ask whether a coat with extra-large buttons would be a better option than one with a zipper. Similarly, ask if there are different sizes, styles or types of fabric that are better options to accommodate their adaptive needs.

You'll elevate your gifting game by tuning in to what your friend or loved one truly needs. Even if it's as simple as Velcro instead of shoelaces, it really is the thought that counts. ♦

*"...put a good deal of thought into the happiness that you are able to give."*

— Eleanor Roosevelt

### Sources for Adaptive Clothing Gifts

The following links connect to resources for fashionable, quality adaptive clothing perfect for giving as gifts:

#### **Silvert's: [www.silverts.com](http://www.silverts.com)**

If adaptive clothing had a department store, Silvert's would be it. From sleepwear to slip-resistant socks, shirts and outerwear, the inventory at Silvert's is both broad and attractive. Plus, the collections for men and women can be searched by type of clothing or by the adaptive need, e.g., limited mobility or ALS.

#### **Izzy Camilleri's IZ Collection: [izadaptive.com](http://izadaptive.com)**

The IZ Collection features an array of classics for people with mobility or accessibility issues who still want to look stylish — think chinos, chunky sweaters, black slacks, etc. — that are perfect wardrobe foundation pieces or the makings of a great capsule wardrobe.

#### **Tommy Hilfiger: [usa.tommy.com/en/tommy-adaptive](http://usa.tommy.com/en/tommy-adaptive)**

Hilfiger's classic American style meets the concept of "design for all" with modified details like magnetic buttons, adjustable hems and Velcro closures. Some styles can be found at Macy's stores too.