

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HOLIDAY 2021 SOLUTIONS

How to Buy Happiness Despite Pressures, Shortages

November and December 2021 retail sales are expected grow between 8.5% and 10.5% this year compared with the 2020 holiday season. That means we'd be looking at a record \$859 billion in spending, according to the National Retail Federation, which adds up to an average of about \$1500 per household.

And most shoppers said they are feeling pressure to get gifts earlier than they normally would — because of rising prices, shipping delays and shortages. Research tells us there are concrete solutions we can incorporate:

Consider “supply-chain proof” gifts this holiday season.

Give the gift of **experiences** that don't have to be delivered ... or aren't on a container ship off the coast of California. Prosocial spending and meaningful donations make you happier, too. Think:

- audio book subscriptions
- gift certificates to restaurants
- annual memberships to local zoos/museums
- meal subscription services
- national parks annual pass
- donations to charity in someone's honor

Give the gift of **time**, our most valuable resource. Think:

- time together at a mutually fun event
- home-made gift certificates for a meal
- invitations to dinner at your home
- a few nights of babysitting for new parents
- a hike or other outdoor adventure

The pressure is on to make things “extra special.” Reflection and gratitude guide the way.

Last year, we were quarantined, so this year, the pressure is on to make the holidays extra special. Some 70 percent of Americans say they typically go over budget during the holidays, and nearly half of consumers say their budget is higher than normal this year because they couldn't celebrate to the same extent last year.

- Take some time to **reflect** ... together. Remember where we started 2021, and the journey we've been through. Remember those who we've lost and the toll that this pandemic has taken on our lives.
- Have a **mini celebration**: One of the most insidious ways we sabotage our happiness is by thinking of all the ways we, as individuals, are inadequate. You're enough! Celebrate incremental success!
- Make a **budget**, set expectations and remember, it's about the people and relationships, not the things or the food.
- Embrace **gratitude**. We're still finding our way out of this devastating pandemic, so gratitude might look a little different this year. Talk about how you're feeling, accept that the pain is real — as are the many blessings — and come together to tell the story of the last 18 months, as a family, gratefully, in honor of those lost.

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For more financial planning guides, tips and purpose-based resources, visit the Money, Relationships and Equality Institute website where you'll find free workbooks like these, and more.



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Follow us on twitter [@UWmore](https://twitter.com/UWmore) and tell us what you will do to consume happiness this holiday season with #consumeholidayhappiness. You can also check out our [website](http://more.sohe.wisc.edu) or [email us](mailto:christine.whelan@wisc.edu).

The MORE (the Money, Relationships & Equality) initiative at the University of Wisconsin – Madison, provides research, teaching, and outreach to establish equality for women and men in relationships, family life, and financial decision-making, while embracing central questions of self-worth, purpose and meaning-seeking throughout the life course. Check out our [website](http://more.sohe.wisc.edu) for resources to help you discuss finances with your family today.

Visit us today: <http://more.sohe.wisc.edu>

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About Prof. Christine B. Whelan

Christine Whelan, PhD is a clinical professor in the Department of Consumer Science. She is the director of the Money, Relationships & Equality Initiative in the School of Human Ecology. In partnership with the Center for Financial Security, Dr. Whelan teaches and researches on topics of self-improvement, gender, relationships formation, and purpose throughout the life course. She earned her masters and doctorate from the University of Oxford, and her undergraduate degree from Princeton University. She lives in Madison, Wi with her partner and five children.

