

Week Two Advent Ideas: Spend Less

When you think of giving gifts of time, you may look at ideas of things to do and wonder if you can actually afford this. While a vacation to another country or major theme park may not help you spend less, there are a lot of options for giving gifts of your time that don't require breaking the bank.

Volunteer together! This can be a one-time volunteer opportunity such as a Habitat for Humanity build or serving at a community meal for a holiday, or it could be an ongoing commitment, such as working with animals in a shelter. You can find places to volunteer in Toronto at volunteertoronto.ca.

Book some museum or aquarium trips. Depending on your financial and time budget, you can purchase a membership, make a special day trip, or use the Toronto Public Library's passes to visit museums and sites around Toronto for free.

Have a spa day. This doesn't need to be super spendy! You can get a coupon to a local mom-and-pop place or do pedicures and facials at home (a quick search online will give you plenty of do-it-yourself ideas). A day or evening of pampering together is a great way to bond and relax.

Take in a show. Movies, plays, musicals, concerts, ballets, operas, and readings are all great fun, and they don't have to be expensive! Many cities have theatres with less expensive tickets and cheap nights with tickets of only \$5-10. Local churches often have music concerts for much less than a big venue such as an opera house or symphony hall, and local theatre houses have a great variety of high quality shows for much less than the bigger places. Also see if operas, symphonies, and ballets in your area have discounted tickets for students, seniors, or people with various memberships.

Take a hike! Bundling up and taking a thermos of tea or hot chocolate makes for cozy winter walks. Whether it's a snowy city park, a forest trail, or wind-swept beach, getting moving outside is a great way to appreciate your local winter wonderland, and the warm drink helps keep the edge off.

Bake some goodies. Many adults wish they learned family recipes when they had the chance. Take some time to teach family how to make Nonna's lasagna, Vovo's rice pudding, or Grammy's fruitcake. You share time, connect with your shared past, and get delicious food at the end! You can also do this as a group with close friends, making a whole meal together of family recipes or having a cookie swap.