



Plants, videos, books, gadgets for shaping up

THE HOLIDAY season could be cited as a study in contradictions.

Fitness fanatics who usually eat right and exercise regularly find themselves with an agenda full of late-night get-togethers where they guzzle gallons of eggnog and other high-calorie holiday delights.

By the time Dec. 31 rolls around, everybody's ready to toast the new year with pledged regimens of exercise, diet and general good health . . . at least until the next holiday season.

Both extremes of the holiday season — self-indulgence and self-renewal — can come together in the gifts you choose this Christmas.

UNWRAPPING A healthy gift is just as much fun as unwrapping a box of calorie-laden goodies, and your gift could benefit the recipient's overall health throughout the coming year.

Here are eight healthy gift ideas you should consider for the health-conscious loved ones on your list:

- **Personalized training:** Pulse monitors have grown up and are no longer limited to simple digital readouts. With the right options, these handy devices can give athletes the expertise to transform a workout into a highly personalized fitness program. For example, Bodyguard's new wristwatch-style monitor measures the pulse with a finger or earlobe sensor via an optoelectronic pulse detection and can be programmed with an individual's maximum and minimum pulse rate. Other options include a buzzer that can be activated to beep in synchronization to the pulse, a pulse recovery function that automatically measures an individual's pulse three and five minutes immediately after a prolonged workout, a clock with 12- or 24-hour display, stopwatch, lap timer and check-point alarm.

- **Plants:** In searching for a biological air purifier for space stations, NASA scientists have discovered the common spider plant fights indoor air pollutants like formaldehyde, nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide. If you'd rather give something more exotic, several other varieties — the Chinese Evergreen, the Peace Lily and the Golden Pothos — work well. Also, consider an aloe plant; its healing salve can do more for the skin than many commercial creams.

- **Pets:** Whether for companionship, fun or therapy, pets are good for our health. Pets fill a human need — the need to love and care for another living thing. Match the pet to your loved one's lifestyle and personality

and be sure to evaluate an animal's specific needs before purchase, advises the Pet Information Bureau.

- **Soothing sounds:** Would a certain name on your list sleep better at night if he or she were lulled by rolling surf, soft rainfall or a soothing waterfall? Look into sound synthesizers, like the Marsona 1200 Sound Conditioner that masks annoying noise with electronically synthesized sound.


- **Rowing to fitness:** Many Americans are rowing their way to fitness because with rowing machines they can work all major muscle groups while improving cardiovascular strength. Take a look at the streamlined models, like Vitamaster's stowaway rower that fits neatly in a closet and unfolds for workouts.

- **Good reading for eating:** Books abound on dieting, vegetarian cooking and dining for better health. Why not give a book offering sound advice for lifetime eating, like Jane Brody's "Good Food Book: Living the High Carbohydrate Way" (W.W. Norton; \$19.95). It discusses the roles fats, proteins, sugar and salt play in the American diet and offers suggestions on how to limit them. Exercise and weight control are emphasized and the second half is a cookbook with 386 recipes based on complex carbohydrates and high in fiber and nutrient vegetables, adequate in protein but low in fat.

- **Video vitality:** Fitness and videos merged when Jane Fonda released her first exercise tape, and the blitz hasn't stopped since. Give a new exercise regimen to a friend via videotapes like Exercise Shorts (Karl-Lorimar Home Video; \$9.95) that help athletes warm up for their specific sport — tennis, swimming, jogging, cycling or skiing. Or help a stressed friend relax with The Relaxed Body Video (Karl-Lorimar; \$19.95) which teaches breathing techniques and whole-body relaxers.

- **Mood music:** Why not give a gift of relaxation with music that reflects the moods and colors of nature? The Nature Company offers several, like "Natural States" by Paul Speer and David Lanz, spacious, environmental music evoking the boldness of landscapes of the Pacific Northwest, or "Cicada" by Chaitanya Deuter, relaxing compositions for wind instruments, strings and synthesizers. Write The Nature Company, P.O. Box 2310, Berkeley, CA 94702.

No matter what you choose, your gift can help loved ones live a happier, healthier life and even enjoy doing it.



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