

# 12 gifts to support your workplace

Written by [Maureen Shaw](#) 13 December 2012

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As the world becomes more complex and uncertain, it may feel as though life does not get easier. There is so much evidence of the stress we are creating for each other — something we all experience each day. The year 2012 has been a year of ups and downs. The news has haunted us with financial woes around the world: war, job losses, weather disasters and personal trials. The pressures and stresses of work and life have taken their toll on many of us. And yet, life continues its circle and in the midst of the chaos we always seem to find something to lift our faces and smile about.

So, I think as we busy ourselves with buying the perfect gifts this holiday season, cooking the perfect meal (that's me), and being the perfect wife, mother, father, daughter, son and employee, let's just stop — stop and give the gift of support and affirmation to our colleagues.

In 2000, Bill Wilkerson co-founded the Global Business and Economic Roundtable for Mental Health. That same year, he created the *12 gifts of Christmas for workplace support and affirmation at times of stress and uncertainty*.

While these gifts were designed for employers to give to their employees, there is something here we can all do for our neighbour at work and at home.

This is the 12th edition of these 12 gifts. We invite you to download and share as gifts to your employees, colleagues, family and friends.

## **1. The gift of helping out**

Be observant and ask your neighbour at work if he or she could use some help of any kind. Look for ways to help out.

## **2. The gift of explanation**

Your employees are probably worried about their savings, pensions and jobs. Even if no one specifically asks, offer seminars, help lines, advisers to answers questions.

## **3. The gift of sharing success**

Sharing the credit and not just the work.

## **4. The gift of support for single working parents**

In difficult times, employees raising children on their own merit thoughtful support. Pregnant women who are still working are especially vulnerable to the health risks of job stress. Reach out to them.

## **5. The gift of empathy in official dealings**

Tax department people, bank personnel, call centers routinely communicate with 20 per cent of the

population who are symptomatically distressed. In all your calls, be clear not legalistic, plainspoken not harsh, kindly not bureaucratic.

### **6. The gift of clear expectations**

Managers should make doubly sure your people know what you expect of them these days. Unclear job expectations create the kind of tension and uncertainty that grind people down.

### **7. The gift of job fulfillment**

Employers should know this: a pay cheque buys bread for the table; job fulfillment buys bread for the soul. Go out of your way to give your employees the tools and time they need to do their job.

### **8. The gift of e-mail relief**

Give the gift of personal contact. The casualties of stress mount daily from information overload and discourteous or uninvited e-mails.

### **9. The gift of inclusion**

More than ever, include your co-workers and employers in meetings and lunch outings. Share information that empowers everyone. A lot of us feel alone these days; emotional isolation predicts depression.

### **10. The gift of listening**

Give this gift to someone everyday.

### **11. The gift of being fair**

Give the gift of fairness and create a ‘trust account’ that earns interest in the form of productive people and satisfied hearts.

### **12. The gift of being home**

Many of us have obligations to elderly parents, and to kids who are troubled and in distress. Being home is important. Be observant and supportive. When kept separate, home and work are both stronger.

Whatever you're celebrating at this time of year, may we all pause and give the gifts that last. I hope you have the warmest, safest and healthiest festive season. And may we see caring, understanding and prevention continue to grow and evolve as a core of our Canadian culture in 2013.

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## [Maureen Shaw](#)

Maureen Shaw is the former president and CEO of the Industrial Accident Prevention Association (now amalgamated into the Workplace Safety and Prevention Services). She spent over 14 years as leader of the IAPA, transforming it from a traditional safety training organization to one that approaches workplaces as psychologically safe and healthy places for people and business to be prosperous. Maureen holds key positions in several national organizations, including the Mental Health Commission of Canada where she is a member of the advisory committee on workforce mental health.

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Thank you Maureen for reminding us that the simple things in life need revisiting. I will be sharing this with my clients!

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Quote

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