

# The greatest gifts can't always be wrapped

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**By Edie Thys Morgan**

We have developed a tradition in our house at Christmas. Every year the kids ask for a Wii, and every year they don't get one. This is not because we are the meanest parents in the world (though on some days we'd easily get two votes). This is because my husband and I share a theory about presents, and it is this: We believe the greatest gifts have two things in common: First, they are much needed (need being a relative term here); And second, they inspire us to get outside, rather than stay inside.

Because of our family's shared obsession with skiing, this theory holds particularly true for Christmas presents. What's not to love about comfy boots, flashy new skis, a stylin' warm coat or your very first racing suit?—all things that have been under the tree at some point. Inevitably, Christmas Day comes and goes with no disappointment other than the fact that it's over. I will say though, that it would be much more convenient if Christmas was on, say, Thanksgiving, when the ski season officially starts. It would be kinder too.

The year my oldest son graduated from hand-me-down and ski swap ski boots he was overjoyed and even somewhat surprised to discover the exact pair of bright blue Lange's he had tried on a month earlier—the ones he had fantasized about every time since when he'd crammed his feet into too-small boots. I felt a little bad about the pain, but he got over it. Likewise, it killed me to see my youngest son start his season like every other, in his brother's outgrown battered helmet, and look

longingly at the kids with pristine new helmets. But when he unwrapped his first very own helmet, a glittering blue and silver masterpiece with matching goggles, the suffering was forgotten. His suffering, that is.

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