



Holiday Stress: Susie Mantell's Grandpa Story for Lifting Spirits at the Holidays by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

As far back as I can remember, every December my grandfather would sit me down for a special talk. He would read to me, *"The New York Times Neeziest Cases,"* one story more touching than the next. He'd ask me to listen very carefully, choose a story that especially spoke to me and make a small donation in his name as my gift to him. That was all he ever wanted for Christmas. And we did it year-after-year-after-year. Then my mom would help me to dictate and, as I got older, to write my own letter and enclose it with a small donation from my allowance to help the family I chose.

My grandfather gave generously to us and to others throughout his life. All he wanted in return was the knowledge that his family understood how to share with others less fortunate, to enjoy and appreciate our own blessings, and what it is to give from the heart whether in word or deed, materially or financially, in our life's work or in the very nature of our relationships. It was a good, good way to teach a child not only to care, but to also take action. These are lessons we can learn at any age, and practice over a lifetime.

A few weeks before the holidays each year, we would also select from our outgrown (*or never-used!*) clothes and toys in good condition, and donate those to children who would not have fresh new clothes and shiny toys, as we would. As adults, we made shopping trips together for new toys and mittens and clothes we'd wrap and deliver as gifts for children we would never know, who would never directly thank us. It felt great. Today, those are wonderful holiday traditions, we practice them joyfully still, and if *this* is not why we are here, then I cannot imagine what it is!

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