

## **Making Ripples**

by Amanda Bancroft

It's the season of giving, and this year, let's give something to ourselves. Generosity and a loving, optimistic attitude all year long will be better than any material gift one could receive. A positive mindset is eco-friendly and comes without packaging! A life with less worry and anxiety apparently helps ulcers and a few other health problems, too.

In many places, but probably not all, people create a culture of complaining, generating jealousy and victim one-upmanship. Wives meet each other for lunch and complain about husbands. Children and teens share what they hate about life. Worse still, this kind of culture takes offense to happiness and prosperity. We may actually feel bad if a friend is expressing a joy – we may even mock them or call them names! This culture pressures the happiest among us to hide or downgrade their life, when in fact, their happiness should shine and upgrade the lives of those around them.

Another's happiness is not taking away from a limited supply of happiness; there is an infinite supply of happiness and everyone has the potential to be happy. A friend's happy marriage doesn't make your own unhappy marriage less happy; rather it should inspire you to find ways to make your unhappy marriage happier or to find a partner more suited to your path to happiness. The happiness of others around us can boost us if we let go of jealousy and focus on generosity.

Giving generously can lead to increased self-worth and happiness. So be as generous as you want! But be generous to yourself, too, and increase your own health as much as possible. The more health you have, the more difference you can make in the world and at home.

Be generous with our environment which gives us so much: water, air, food, and life itself. Create a compost pile to give back unused scraps of organic material that can become fertilizer and mulch. Don't be jealous of those with prettier backyards or properties, instead bring the beauty of nature home and it'll boost your mood and productivity. You can have house plants if there is no yard, or you could even grow food in small balcony and window gardens. You can make a difference for yourself and others by taking inspiration from those you envy.

The "reason for the season" is something inside us, whether we approach it from a religious or secular standpoint. Some simply call it love. Like happiness, there is an unlimited supply of love in the world, too, and someone else getting love does not make it harder for you to be loved. There are many different holidays being celebrated this month, and many ways to show love to family, friends, strangers, nature, and ourselves. This season, may generosity towards all of these guide us like a lighthouse through the darkest days of winter.

Amanda Bancroft is a writer, artist, and naturalist building an off-grid cottage for land conservation on Kessler Mountain. She and her husband Ryan blog about their adventures and offer a solar-hosted online educational center on how to make a difference with everyday choices at: [www.RipplesBlog.org](http://www.RipplesBlog.org).