

Fatal Conveniences™: Holiday Gifts: The Pressure to Spend

[00:00:00] Fatal Convenience Intro

Darin: It's that time of the week for another fatal convenience. This is a bite-size segment that addresses some of society's fatal conveniences and the steps you can take to avoid becoming a victim of them. I define fatal conveniences as the things we may be doing because the world we live in makes us believe we have to. Tap water, shampoo, sunglasses, food... I dive into the hidden truths behind some of our everyday choices that could not only be harming us but even killing us, so let's dive in.

[00:00:41] Fatal Convenience - Holiday Gifts: The Pressure to Spend

Darin: Hey, everybody, welcome to the show. Happy Holidays. As we're cruising into the holidays, we are keeping with the theme, your fatal convenience, we are bringing about more consciousness around the holidays, and this one is the fatal convenience of Christmas gifts or holiday gifts in general. It's very interesting. On the one hand, from a Christmas perspective, the gifting came by way of centered around community, giving to the less fortunate. That's what we want to believe. There's an underpinning of that's there, but also there's this guilt. There's this whole Santa, Saint Nic, decorating trees, all of that stuff. Well, of course, that running around the tree was rooted in the paganism. Of course, we talked about that when we were talking about the actual Christmas tree that was linked to that paganism, but then Queen Victoria and her German husband basically brought that to Europe and made it okay to do. Listen, I'm going to cruise through this very fast, but this is interesting.

[00:01:54] The origin of holiday gift giving

Darin: The gifting of Christmas originally came of course, by little baby Jesus, three wise men giving gifts to the infant Jesus. That's kind of the underpinnings there of we're celebrating Jesus's life, blah, blah, blah. Well, does that represent that at all? Of course, not. Go to church, some people, and it's a tree, it's St. Nick, Santa, it's wrapping gifts. It represents nothing like that. So how the hell did that happen? In early modern Europe, gift-giving had its roots in begging. In the 18th century, Christmas was not a holiday celebrated at homes, but rather it was celebrated in the streets. So there's this interesting book by Stephen Nissenbaum, called *The Battle for Christmas*, so check that book out. It basically said bands of young men would run around the cities and demand handouts from the people of higher class. That was the battle for Christmas. It was then in the 19th century that the holiday was reinvented by the New York elites, so interesting, to resemble the Christmas that we know today. As the population grew rapidly, New York elites became increasingly frightened by the traditions around this December kind of social inversion. We need to give to the poor, they didn't like that, typical aristocrats. They were concerned by this celebratory aspect of it. In response to these concerns, a group of wealthy men gathered together, and they were called the knickerbockers, a new series of traditions for this time of year. A gradually moved Christmas celebrations out of the streets and into the homes.



Clement Clarke Moore, a member of the Knickerbocker solidified the new Christmas traditions with an enormously popular poem. Ready for this? A Visit from St. Nick or known as The Night Before Christmas. Their traditions of gift-giving had then shifted from the lower class handouts to actually focusing on the children. It was at this point that the marketing opportunity exploded, and that's exactly what they want bringing us the Santa in the shopping mall phenomenon. From there, Christmas consumption, gift-giving, has been driven by the marketing departments and has nothing to do with sweet baby Jesus or any other things that we're celebrating around this holiday season. So there you go. Fun facts. This year, American consumers expect to spend approximately on average \$886 on Christmas gifts. Americans throw away 25% more trash overall between Thanksgiving and New Year holidays. The extra waste amounts to 25 million tons of garbage. Just check this out, 2.6 billion Christmas cards sold each year in the US could fit in a football stadium 10 stories high, 50,000 cubic yards of paper. Now, is there anything wrong with giving gifts?

[00:05:35] So what's wrong with giving gifts?

Darin: Is there anything wrong with giving a card? Of course, not. We're gonna get into the negative sides of wrapping paper next week, so make sure you tune into that. Listen, what makes it convenient? It's convenient because this is the cultural thing that we've just all accepted, buying presents for loved ones, getting into the whole thing. You're getting bombarded by Christmas advertising, holiday advertising, all these things. Companies are pushing all these big sales. It's all funnels that are leading you to spend more money for as many people as possible. Christmas is a time that people also, and I want you to think about this, you are being programmed to do this. I just want you to be aware that you are being programmed to splurge, you're being programmed to eat more things that are unhealthy, all of this stuff, but I'm not gonna go down that road, but it's part of this phenomenon of Christmas. We've just accepted all of this culture, and it literally was carefully over time orchestrated to be a marketing opportunity for companies and people owning those companies. As we are being pushed as consumers and fed more and more marketing tactics, we are feeling the heat and the stress of what am I going to buy this person, what am I going to get my kids, what am I going to get my husband, what am I going to get this person, all of this stuff. And largely, is it needed or is it even necessary? Of course, e-commerce makes it even that much easier. They'll even wrap it for you. You can just click a button and send it to whomever you want. Again, we're gonna get into wrapping paper and all that other stuff and the waste around that, but right now it's just about Christmas gifting that I'm going to talk about, really the psychology around that.

[00:07:40] The psychology of gift-giving at Christmas

Darin: There was a study by LendEDU showed that 22% of Americans surveyed believe their Christmas spending will leave them in debt. These big holiday shoppers expect to be around \$554 in debt on average once the holidays are over. How is that good? So you're gonna go in debt. On average, everyone's going into debt by over 500 bucks. Then interesting facts. 14.2% of Americans say they sell their possessions to fund Christmas spending. That's crazy, 14.2% of Americans. Do you know how many people that is, that's millions of people. That's 3.5 million people that are feeling the pressure to sell possessions so that they can spend money on wasteful gifts. 4.2% of the people actually are getting loans to cover the holiday season. 62% of Americans have lied about how much they like a gift. So



think about it. Come on. 62% of Americans have lied about how they like a gift. A survey of over 2,000 people showed that this 62% have lied about these gifts, not exactly harmful in itself, but when you couple that fact that there are people going in debt over buying presents, they're feeling stressed, all of that stuff, that's not exactly good for anybody. Think about it. Every second gift you give, they don't want it. They don't like it. It's crazy, over that, 62%. We're not being conscious about what we're buying. We're just feeling like we need to buy something. We can't possibly show up in the family and not have gifts to give, so that's what leads it. All this pressure of this cultural crap leads us to buy unnecessary things, which is then wasteful. The gifts themselves, I'm not talking about the wrapping paper, the Christmas gifts themselves end up in landfills. Nearly 5 billion pounds of retail items end up in landfills during the Christmas period, that's by Forbes magazine. The rise of e-commerce has made it even worse. It may be more convenient for you, but you're more conveniently buying some crap that no one wants, especially the people that you think want it. The returns process accounts for 1.6 billion gallons of diesel fuel, and 15 million metric tons of CO2, that's just returns.

[00:10:38] Conscious gift giving

Darin: Listen, there are things you can do. Buy gifts that promote someone's life. If you're not sure, ask them. There's nothing wrong with asking them what they need, what they want. Give them something that they may not give themselves that maybe is healthier for the environment, maybe is healthier for them, maybe is better for the trajectory of where they want, maybe something that's inspirational for them. Think about in terms of that, and make it go into your heart and think about what it is that they want. Take some more consciousness around this thing. Maybe it's a solar panel, battery charger. Maybe it's a boardshorts made with recycled materials. Maybe it's a book on nature that you touched in. Maybe it's even a super life camp where they get to supercharge their life at New Years, maybe it's that even, but the point is be more aware. The most important thing you can do is scrutinize your own buying. This is huge. This has not only gift potential for them to actually like it, but it also has environmental impact. Choose your gifts more creatively with less waste. Make something. I remember when I was in my early 20s, I made candles. I got fascinated with how to make beeswax natural candles. I went to an army surplus store and got all these little ceramics, and I poured the candle wax in there and made specific candles for everybody. It was fantastic. Yes, I was a poor college kid at the time, but I tell you what, I learned something. It was personal and everyone was infinitely more impacted. And who doesn't like a non-smelly candle? So I was even doing this way back in the day. Thoughtful gifts mean so much more because they know you thought about them. They know you made them. They know they were personalized for them. Opt-out of the normal way of getting all of this Christmas consumption. Hashtag, no more Christmas consumption. I'm not saying don't celebrate it, I'm saying do it in a much healthier way for you, for them, and for the environment. Let's do this. Come on, let's wake up. Let's be conscious of the ideas, thoughts, customs that have been impressed upon us. In this case, you learned a little bit today from the aristocrats, essentially, in New York City, and coming down to support the horrible consumption idea and marketing of a Christmas holiday that has certainly lost its way in the celebration of nature, in the celebration of a seer like Christ was. It's lost its way. Let's get it back. Recently, I found an archeologist in the area, a local guy, he found crystals and petrified pine cones and stuff like that. I supported him and his hard work and finding



unique stones and jewelry and things that he made and he created and he found. Those are things, and people are blown away when you do stuff like that. Okay, that's it. Fatal convenience, break the habits of just gifting anything and come from your heart, especially in the holiday season. Let it come out. Make something, create something, find something that is good for the person that is uplifting, powerful, and not just a stupid ass tchotchke on the holidays. All right. I love you all. Happy holidays.

[00:14:37] Podcast Outro

Darin: Thanks for tuning in everyone. I hope that left you feeling inspired to take a closer look at the everyday choices you're making and how they could be impacting your health and even the planet. If you want to learn more about life's fatal conveniences, head over to fatalconveniences.com. You can sign up for the exclusive access to Fatal Conveniences episodes, news, insights, and more. And all this great stuff gets sent each week straight to your inbox, making it really easy. Now, that's a convenience without the negative side effects. It only takes a few seconds to join. Just fill in the form and take that amazing step towards making better choices. Remember, small changes can have a big impact. So, keep diving my friends, keep diving. And if you haven't had a chance to check out the interview, I released earlier on the week, here's what you missed:

[00:15:43] Snippet - What Foods to Eat to Beat Disease

Dr. William: The great news is that you can eat a lot of different things. In fact, I write in my book about 200 different foods, and because food should be aligned with what you enjoy eating. I'm a little bit different than a lot of doctors who tell you what not to eat. I can tell you what not to eat, but I prefer to tell you what to eat, what you should add to your life rather than elimination because human nature is pretty predictable. Human nature abhors deprivation. I think that if you go back to a lot of the traditional diets and look elementally at the ingredients, plant-based foods, hands down, have shown in every research study to do something good for us and something that we should actually be leaning more into. It's not eating a wonder food or five foods, eat as diversely as you possibly can because our gut, our healthy gut bacteria loves diversity. That's really something that we should do.