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Be your best — even when you're at home

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The holidays tend to bring out the best in us. That doesn't mean, however, that our neighbors will appreciate it if we disrupt their sleep, trash their doorstep or steal their parking space.

Natural centerpieces

Come to think of it, that ordinary centerpiece will no longer do on my dinner table. This season, we all want something different. Minoo Hersini, creative director at Au Ciel Design Studio, [au-ciel.com](#), creates unique displays by incorporating daikon radishes, mint, curly parsley, chives, enoki mushrooms and upland cress. In addition to the herbs and radishes, all you need is a small cylindrical glass container and a weeping willow, used to wrap the container. Can a dinner-table centerpiece get any easier — and inexpensive — than that?

It's a wrap

This one's for all the procrastinators. (I know, I know . . . it takes one to know one.) **Wrap It Up: 100s of Fast, Fun, and Festive Gift Wrapping Ideas** (St. Martin's Press; \$21.99) by Espen Markussen has gift-wrapping solutions for just about every shape and size gift box. Most require materials commonly found around the home, such as twine, buttons, decorative buckles, scarves or, to my surprise, a dog collar. Traditional paper and ribbon packaging also are shown, but why settle for the usual when you can impress your friends with a quirky design. I mean, really, would you rather get a box wrapped in regular paper or one wrapped in funky fabric and dried fruit and flowers tied with jute cord? If you chose the later, you'll love this book.

Resolve to be a better neighbor

Show your neighbors how much you appreciate them without spending a dime by being respectful. Peggy Abkemeier, president of [Rent.com](#) suggests the following: *Don't Let These Walls Talk*: All sounds travel so keep noise levels low before 10 a.m. and after 10 p.m. *Party Permission Slip*: If you're planning to hold a party, consider telling your neighbors in advance by slipping notes under their doors. *Don't Trash Your Neighbors*: Leaving a trash bag outside your front door to bring downstairs a little later could ruin the ambiance for your neighbors. *Control Your Critter*: When taking your pet for a walk, put on the leash before you leave your apartment so that you're able to control your pet in case you're sharing the elevator with a neighbor. *Parking Patrol*: Be mindful of neighbors when parking and make reasonable efforts to do so efficiently so that others have room to park.