

The Most Unusual Item in My Purse

A collection of travel accessories is arranged on a dark blue, textured background. The items include a pair of white sunglasses, a tan hat, a black watch with a red 'LUGO' logo, and a black pen with a red 'SIGNED DOCKE' logo. A brown leather bag is partially visible on the left side.

THE MOST
UNUSUAL
THING
in my purse

LIVE WELL UTAH

What do you carry in your purse? Beyond the wallet, keys, lip balm and phone, do you have anything out of the ordinary? Adding a few simple things to your purse could make a big difference— in your life and the lives of those around you.

Seems like ladies' purses have gotten bigger and bulkier over the years – a variable black hole for losing keys, phones, kid toys and who knows what else. You might be surprised at what all can fit in one of those things! Recently, I began packing something unusual in my purse and it's starting to change my life.

Blank note cards, envelopes, a pen, and some stamps. That's it. I think of it as my heart warmer kit.

You might be thinking: *That's it? That's changing your life?* Think of it this way...when was the last time you received a handwritten thank you note or friendly card? Did you like the way it felt to know that someone took time to think about you and then personally reach out to you? What a great opportunity to pay that feeling forward and bring some sunshine to someone's day.

In this day and age of electronic everything, the personal touch of a handwritten note is being lost in the immediacy of technology. While sending social media notes may be efficient and can be personalized, it's just not the same.

Don't take my word for it. Try it out for yourself. A simple place to start is to build your heart warmer kit. The notecards don't need to be fancy or expensive. Don't forget the stamps. I heard one time that "feeling appreciation and not sharing it is like wrapping a gift but not giving it." Mailing or delivering the card is crucial to the process. Writing notes anonymously is even more fun but can possibly be a little more difficult to deliver.

Next, find a quiet moment to think about who has done something you appreciate or admire. The more practice you get at tuning into opportunities to show appreciation, the easier this will be. You'll find yourself part way through a day seeing someone struggle or triumph and you'll have a twinge in your heart and a thought come into your mind to send them a note of encouragement, congratulations or thanks for their efforts. That's why my cards are now in my purse. When I started, it was a "do this once a week" type goal for me; now it's like I've primed the pump of appreciation and I see the need around me often.

The amazing part is that this little heart warmer kit I carry with me warms my heart as I write, then someone else's as they read, and sometimes, mine again if I get a sweet note of appreciation back. And that's why the most unusual item in my purse is changing my life.

This article was written by Rebecca Mills, Extension assistant professor in family consumer sciences and 4-H youth development