



# UU Writers

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## The Gift of Liberating Love

Participant Packet

January 2024

## Personal Warm Up Prompts

Ease your way into this month's theme with one or more of these prompts. Use them as a free association exercise. Don't try to create a full or finished piece of writing. Simply take around 5 minutes to jot down bullet point thoughts, a short intuitive response, idea fragments or maybe even sketch some images. Have fun getting your creative juices going!

**Option A:** When and how did you first fall in love with writing? (What keeps you in love with it now?)

**Option B:** Who/what was your first love? How does that experience still shape you today?

**Option C:** Whose love has companioned you the longest?

**Option D:** What has been your greatest act of love?

**Option E:** What most helped put you back together after love broke you to bits?

**Option F:** Listen to and reflect on one of these songs on *The Gift of Liberating Love*:

- **Love Reaches Out – The Sanctuaries**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mw-D5qjxxSQ>
- **Want - Birdtalker**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSXWadIWN38>
- **Still I Will Love - Shaina Taub**  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDnbAJ\\_ljL4&list=PLvXOKgOQVYP5CYMQPgUhBGV2gKmu60gBT&index=16](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDnbAJ_ljL4&list=PLvXOKgOQVYP5CYMQPgUhBGV2gKmu60gBT&index=16)

*p.s. If music is your writing muse, you might want to check out our entire **Soul Matters music playlist** on *The Gift of Liberating Love*:*

Click [here](#) for the **Spotify** playlists on [The Gift of Liberating Love](#)

Click [here](#) for the **YouTube** playlist on [The Gift of Liberating Love](#)

# Writing Project Exercises

## Suggested Steps:

### Step 1: Which project exercise/prompt is yours and why?

Spend some time reflecting on the options below. Treat it as a spiritual discernment exercise, in which you try to discern which option seems to be emotionally pulling you towards it. For those who are comfortable, you might think of it as asking, “Which exercise is my inner voice inviting me to explore?” Or to put it another way, the goal is to figure out which exercise is “yours” and why that is so.

### Step 2: First thoughts

Write whatever comes to mind in response to the exercise you selected. Free associate using words, sentence fragments, images.

### Step 3: Write your piece

Write your reflection, poem, story, song, or story inspired by your writing.

Take your time. For some, their piece will spill out whole cloth in a matter of moments. For others of us, it will be a journey of twists and turns, with us writing and rewriting as first drafts open us to new insights, inspiring second drafts, and even thirds.

## Option A: Your Story of Being Loved Whole

If he truly loves you, he will love you when you are an ocean breeze, but also when you are a summer storm. You were not made to be loved in parts; you were meant to be loved as a whole.

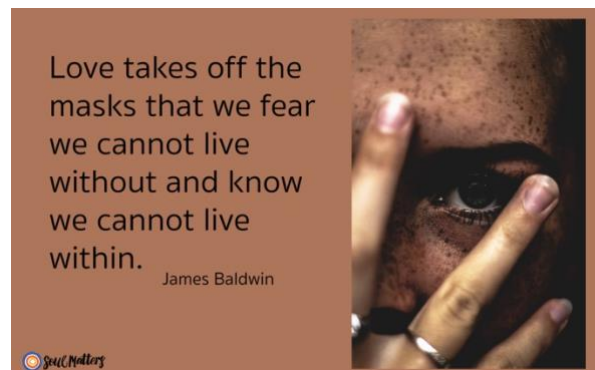
*Nikita Gill*

Find those who tell you “Do not be afraid,” yet stay close enough to tremble with you. This is love.

*Cole Arthur Riley*

We often hide parts of ourselves out of fear of rejection. We become convinced that our friend or new romantic partner won’t be able to handle our edges, our awkwardness, our fears, our wounds. But just when we’ve convinced ourselves that we will forever have to keep those parts of ourselves hidden, someone comes along and offers a full embrace. And doesn’t just offer it but wants it. And in doing so, we don’t just present our whole selves; we become whole.

Who gave you this gift? Who is one of the few you’ve been able to be your whole self with? Who has encouraged you to be your best and has also been there when things do not go as planned? Can you recall how it felt the first time you risked being vulnerable with them? Do you remember how it changed you?



## Option B: Love Throughout Our Lifetime

Love takes many forms. How it shows up in our life this year is often quite different from last year or from when we were a child. Use your writing this month to capture how love has changed and shifted throughout your life.

And be gentle with yourself as you write. Some of the ways love has shown up in our lives have been hurtful or ugly. Hopefully your writing can help you process that and reflect on any lessons learned that you want to pass along. And in the cases where love was liberating and joyful, be sure to think about how you passed it on to liberate and bring joy to others.

## Option C: That Thing You Love to Do

Follow your bliss!  
*Joseph Campbell*

Do what you love. Know your own bone; gnaw at it, bury it, unearth it, and gnaw it still.  
*Henry David Thoreau*

Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.  
*Howard Thurman*

For some of us, it's our job. For others, it's the thing we do in our free time. It goes by many names: our passion, our hobby, our calling. And it takes so many forms: running, singing, sewing, painting, stamp-collecting, reading, traveling, working with kids, working with our hands.

Whatever it is or whatever we call it, one thing is common to all: It makes us come alive. It liberates us from the dullness that can otherwise set in. It's not grandiose to say it saves us.

So, this month use your writing to say thanks to your passion, that thing you love to do. Write an ode or love letter to it. In poem form or prose, explain how it grounds, saves or liberates you.

## Option D: Self-Love

The Dalai Lama says that when we make a mistake, we need to ask, "Can I love this too?" Can I love all of me, even the peevish parts? Even the insecure bits, the anxious bits? Because I can love my niece even when she sticks her hand in my cup of coffee and gets mad and hollers at me for it. It's easy. I don't expect her to be perfect. Can I extend that understanding to myself? Can I love my anxiety too? My depression too? My desire to seem like I have my shit together even when I'm freaking out? Can I love all of me?

[\*Rev. Kate Landis\*](#)

Use your writing this month to tell a tale of what you've learned about loving yourself. Rev. Landis' quote offers us some rich questions to engage with. Which part of you is hardest for you to extend acceptance and kindness to? Your insecurity? Anxiety? Depression? Something else? Is there a connection for you between your ability to be gentle with others and your ability to be gentle with yourself?



## Option E: Another Angle on Self-Love... Letters from Love

To condemn yourself as unlovable is to swallow a terrible lie. And to believe that you must earn love through perfectionism, or that you must seek love from others in order to become whole, turns all of us into hungry beggars. I believe there is an ocean of warm, affectionate, and outrageously unconditional love available to us all - and that it is conveniently accessible from within. I don't believe anyone is excluded from this ocean of love; it is only a question of learning how to hear it, how to feel it, how to trust it. - [Elizabeth Gilbert](#)

The writer, Elizabeth Gilbert, is serious about self-love. As her quote above intimates, she struggles to free herself from the self-punishing voices of perfectionism and inadequacy, and she wants the same freedom for others.

One of the tactics she uses is her daily practice of writing herself letters *from Love*. That's right, *from* love. Not from herself. The distinction is key. It's her way of going beyond simple self-affirmations and tapping into a bigger kind of love, arguably the biggest kind. She quotes Einstein, who said, "The most important decision we make is whether we believe we live in a friendly or hostile universe." By writing herself letters from Love itself, she is telling herself not only that she is lovable but that she is surrounded by a loving and friendly universe. If Love could speak, what do you think it would want to say to you?

Here's her technique. Before putting pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard), she asks, "**Dear Love, what would you have me know today?**" Out of that mind frame, she shapes her letters. Or to put it as she would: She then lets love itself write a letter to her.

So friends, how might it change your days if you began them by figuring out what love itself wants to say to you?

Well, why not find out by taking a week this month to write a daily letter to yourself from Love?! (*And if a week's worth of letters feels too intimidating, try writing just one!*)

To help you on your way, here are a few of the weekly blog posts Gilbert writes to support people as they do this daily practice. They begin with a general reflection and then end with one of the Letters from Love she has written:

- <https://elizabethgilbert.substack.com/p/welcome-to-week-two>
- <https://elizabethgilbert.substack.com/p/letters-from-love-with-special-guest-eff>
- <https://elizabethgilbert.substack.com/p/letters-from-love-with-special-guest-f90>

And here are a few examples of letters others have written:

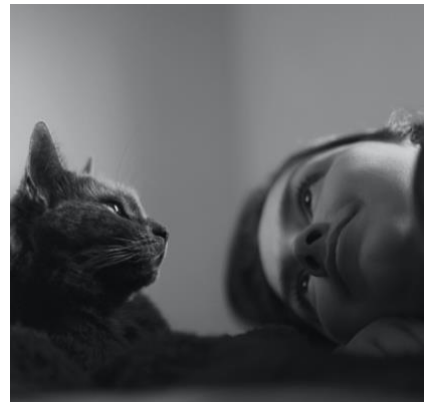
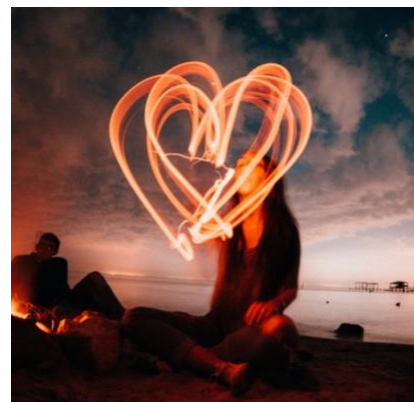
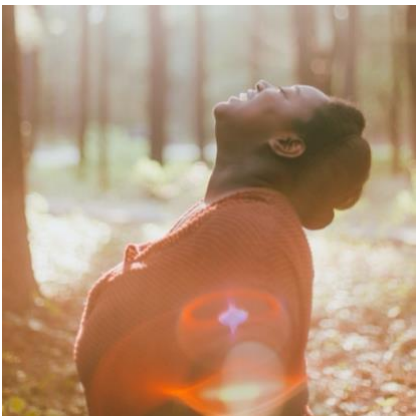
- <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1v82xXq4a6l22qbVg10fGgb1rZmjLOmCXZF-89qNClto/edit?usp=sharing>
- <https://www.instagram.com/p/CzJpfQhAfez/>



## Option F: Visual Prompts

This prompt is all about letting an image spark your writing. Below are a handful of pictures related to our theme of *the gift of liberating love*. Look them over until one reaches out and asks you to write about it!

For some of us, the image that stands out will take us back in time to a memory we want to write about. For others, our chosen image might inspire us to write a fictional short story based on it. For still others, a picture will evoke a new perspective about the theme that we will then tease out in our writing. *(Or maybe these pictures remind you of a favorite picture you took recently or have treasured for a while. If so, great! Write about those pictures instead.)*



## Option G: Love & Grief

Love and grief are tightly tied. Love gets us through grief, or at least slowly softens it. Grief teaches us about the depth of our love. And the way it lives on.

What has life taught you about these intimately linked emotions? Use your writing to explain it. Or figure it out.

Here's one couple's story to companion you on your way:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZSM9QvPBjAk&list=PLvXOKgOQVYP5XWrUFZCLnOlpHAT9Yclhq&index=9>

## Option H: For the Love of Country

To accept your country without betraying it, you must love it for that which shows what it might become. America -- this monument to the genius of ordinary men and women, this place where hope becomes capacity, this long, halting turn of 'no' into the 'yes' -- needs citizens who love it enough to re-imagine and re-make it.

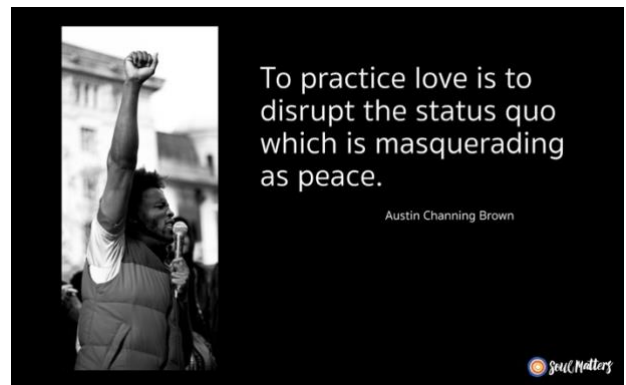
*Cornel West*

We are told from an early age to love our country. It's such a confusing and complicated message. Especially for those of us who've been harmed or excluded by this nation.

How does one keep that balance? Between being critical and grateful? Between pledging our allegiance and protesting what so many so-called patriots refuse to acknowledge? How do you love a place where you're regularly told to "go back where you came from!" or "Love it or leave it!"? How do you love a nation that participates in the killing of your neighbors?

Cornel West is clearly right: we need to love our country enough to re-make it. But for many of us, the road to embracing that has been a winding one.

Use your writing this month to tell the tale of those twists and turns.



## Option I: Make Your Own Way

Our prompts are here to support you. So, if none of the above prompts speak to you this month, feel free to find inspiration on the theme from wherever it comes.

Whatever it is, let the gravitational pull of memory, reflection and the pulse of your personal imagination be your guide. Let love take you where it will.

# Closing & Companions Words

*Choose one of the pieces below that speaks to you. Read it after completing your writing projects as a way of celebrating your writing journey this month. Or read the words regularly while working on your project prompt to keep you grounded and inspired. It sometimes helps to write them out and tape them above your desk or on your bathroom mirror, living with them during the month*

May the love that overcomes all differences,  
that heals all wounds,  
that puts to flight all fears,  
that reconciles all who are separated,  
Be in us and among us  
now and always.

[Frederick E Gillis](#)

In the end it won't matter how much we have,  
but how generously we have given.  
It won't matter how much we know,  
but rather how well we live.  
And it won't matter how much we believe,  
but how deeply we love

[John C Morgan](#)

Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within.  
*James Baldwin*



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