
How to Create Authentic and Intimate Connections



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“When I give, I give myself.” —Walt Whitman

In the details of our days, it's easy to lose sight of the meaning behind the moments. It's easy to forget the truth that giving, at its essence, is a creative activity and that every day holds abundant opportunities to surrender to the instincts of the heart.

Not long after I had moved into a new home, I learned that lesson from an unexpected source. That summer day, my almost five-year-old neighbor Sophie cautiously peeked through the trees separating her backyard from mine and introduced herself. After she and I had exchanged some important facts about each other, like how old she and her sister were and the names of my kitties, she suddenly asked, “What's your favorite color?”

“Well, I like yellow,” I replied. In an instant, she was off, disappearing around the side of her house and calling behind her shoulder, “Stay right there, stay right there!” When she returned, she came bearing gifts. “Here's a flower from our garden,” she announced, “a yellow flower.” With a smile big enough for the both of us, she stretched her arm toward me. She was carefully holding between her fingers a perfect yellow pansy.

It's been a few years since Sophie graced me with her pansy and I'm sure she's forgotten all about it. But I'll never forget her gift—and the generous smile that leapt from her heart and landed smack in the middle of mine. Sophie knew instinctively what the beloved classic of India, the Bhagavad Gita, has taught for millennia: “He who offers to me [God] with devotion only a leaf, or a flower, or a fruit, or even a

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little water, this I accept from that yearning soul, because with a pure heart it was offered with love.” Sophie reminded me that it’s not just *what* we give but *how* we give that makes all the difference. It’s not the size of the gift but the size of our heart.

Tips for Honoring Your Heart through Giving

You honor your reason for being when you let your heart give in ways that quicken another’s heart. You don’t have to spend a lot of money to be a good giver. It’s your inner gifts, the ones that touch another, heart to heart, that are the most precious offerings. Here are six tools that can help you create more authentic and intimate connections as you practice giving creatively, wisely, and from the heart.

TIP 1: Ask different questions.

When someone in your life is being irascible, sullen, or standoffish, catch your impulse to criticize, jump to conclusions, or ask condescendingly, “What’s wrong with you?” Ask more helpful questions, such as “*Why are you hurting and what can I do to help you right now?*” You can’t solve others’ problems for them, but you can help them understand what they are feeling and encourage them to articulate their needs. Open your heart and give by taking the opportunities that come your way to help the people in your life discover their hidden needs.

TIP 2: Give unbirthday gifts.

Do you only think about giving gifts on special occasions or when you are expected to give? Try showing up with spontaneous, unbirthday

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gifts to let others know how much you appreciate them or to soothe the heart of someone in pain. Giving simple, spur-of-the-moment gifts from your heart will also help you to keep your own heart wide open, increasing your capacity to give and to receive even more.

TIP 3: Be creative with your gifts.

Rather than buying a present for someone at the last minute, think ahead and allow yourself to get inspired. Go into your heart and ask yourself what would really touch the heart of the person you will be giving to. Remember that the best gifts aren't the biggest or most expensive. Consider spending quality time with someone as your gift. If you have more than one child or sibling in your family, think about giving him or her a one-on-one date with you. The possibilities are endless.

TIP 4: Give your full attention.

Do you make yourself available to those who need you, or do you multitask—answering the phone, text messaging, or surfing TV channels—while your co-worker, friend, partner, or child is trying to have a conversation with you? Giving your focused attention is an unparalleled gift that tells the people in your life that you honor them. Draw a circle around your conversations. Do what it takes to sustain the circuit of energy between you and the person you are with. Simply turning off the TV, phone, or BlackBerry and looking into someone's eyes as you listen or share can transform a situation. It shows that you care enough to be completely present.

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TIP 5: Share your life wisdom.

Every one of us has a particular wisdom that we have garnered through our life experiences. Drawing from your well of wisdom to help others can be like offering a cool cup of water to someone who has been suffering from a long, agonizing thirst. Do you intentionally pass on your wisdom? If you don't know where to start, think about a challenging experience that taught you something valuable or an insight from an article, a program, or a book that spurred a transformational moment for you. Share that insight with someone you think would benefit from your experience.

TIP 6: Let go and invite flow.

If the magic of flow isn't happening in your life as you would like it to, go back to this simple formula: "I compel something new to come into my life by giving something away." Try cleaning out a closet and dropping off old clothes to the Salvation Army store. Instead of whittling away time on an unfruitful relationship, commitment, or habit (like watching too much TV), find a way to help someone who needs support. Consider offering your professional services gratis to a good cause. Invite your children to round up old toys and books and help them donate these items to a local charity. Watch what happens when you get rid of the clutter and open a space that you dedicate with intention to the flow of giving and receiving what you want in your life. Generosity of the heart never goes unanswered.

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About Patricia Spadaro

Patricia Spadaro is the author of the award-winning book [Honor Yourself: The Inner Art of Giving and Receiving](#), an inspiring guide to giving your best gifts by learning to honor your own needs, give with your heart, let go of painful endings, and celebrate your unique voice. Patricia is dedicated to empowering others to live more deeply, fully, and authentically. Her books have been translated into more than 20 languages worldwide. For more inspiration and to learn more, visit her at www.HowToHonorYourself.com.

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