

Hand out copy of the drawing of elder and small child hands [download from <http://generouselders.com/gifts/materials/materials.html>] to each person in the circle.

When you imagine offering a word of wisdom to young people, what would that word or phrase be?

Again, encourage individual responses to this question.

Session IV

Have you found it easier to give or receive from others? What is true for you at this time in your life? In what ways are they both gifts? How do you gift yourself at this time in your life?

Again, encourage individual responses to this question.

Session V

We often overlook our own essential gifts: perhaps in your earlier years, you were a caregiver, a teacher, an artist, a good provider. Now you may be a good listener, have a ready smile, or bring a good sense of humor to your friends. What gift do you offer this group? This community?

Again, encourage individual responses to this question.

Session VI

Select one of the images from the film and write an original poem, or share a favorite poem that an image suggests to you, or write a brief story about an image to share with the group or larger community, or create a collage of important gifts given and received.

At every meeting, if sharing becomes very personal, remind people to hold these conversations in confidence.

In every case, these discussions may be done between two people first before opening up to the larger group for discussion.

All these sessions may be repeated many times.

Please contact me with additional ways in which you use this film. They will be posted on the website.

The Gifts Project

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Gifts

for navigating life's journey

A Film by Penny Kaela Bauer

In my Dream

A Circle of Elders

Offering Gifts for the Journey

In 1998 I awoke from a dream, so powerful in its impact that I could not ignore it. In this dream, myself and others enter a circular space that is dimly lit. Inside we see a circle of elders. In turn, we stand before each elder and ask, "What is the gift that you have to offer me at this time in my life? And then receive the gift.

Inspired by this dream, I began photographing hands of elders offering us gifts of support. The *Gifts for navigating life's journey* film, a soothing visual meditation, combines words and music with black and white images of many of these elders' hands holding symbolic gifts. The film is part of a program that includes guided instructions for single or multiple sessions of activities which stimulate individual and group communication and creativity.

While spending time with these wise and vital elders, I came to understand that there is always the opportunity for generosity and gratitude, regardless of one's circumstances in life, and that it is essential for all of us to develop and share our gifts and talents and to facilitate this in others.

When you watch this film alone or with others, I invite you to receive these gifts as support on life's journey.

The Gifts Journey for Seniors

GOALS:

Provides an opportunity for seniors

To share the experience of a film of symbolic gifts offered by other elders.

To share their own experiences of giving and receiving

To give seniors opportunities to be seen, heard, honored.

To create supportive community through sharing stories of life experiences.

USES:

This film may be used in a variety of situations:

It may be shown simply as a quiet meditation.

It can be used over several meetings to facilitate sharing and discussion as detailed below.

It can be the basis for further creativity: telling stories, writing poetry, drawing or singing songs.

The following is a suggested format for use over several sessions to expand the group experience through shared impressions and stories. Narration, opening questions and suggested activities are included for your guidance. If possible, sitting in a circle where everyone can see each other is best. If necessary, plan ahead to have some assistance with this.

SESSION I

INTRODUCTION

I am happy to introduce a beautiful and thoughtful experience. This short film celebrates the wisdom of elders through the use of images of their hands offering symbolic gifts.

As you watch, you may be reminded of a gift you have received from another, or a gift you have offered another from your own life experience.

Show about five minutes of the film, then pause it.

Was there an image or word that interested you? Which one was that? Does the image or word hold some special meaning for you?

Allow time for individual response, encouraging participation by anyone who is comfortable sharing.

We'll watch some more of the images now. Perhaps one will remind you of something in your own life.

Show another five minutes of the film.

Talk about the image that had meaning for you, if that feels comfortable. Now we'll watch a few more minutes of this film.

When we meet next time, please bring some small possession that holds meaning for you to show to the group and perhaps share its story.

SESSION II

Show another portion of the film. Then have each person hold their object in their hands for others to see.

Tell us what you brought, and why you brought it. Perhaps there is a little story to tell about your offering.

Encourage each person to participate, if even just to say what they brought. Suggest that discussions take place after all participants have had an opportunity to present their offerings. If sharing becomes very personal, remind people to hold these conversations in confidence. Show another portion of the film.

SESSION III

Begin with showing some more of the film.

Hand out copies of the drawing of hands (download from <http://generouselders.com/gifts/materials/materials.html>) to each person in the circle. If sharing is extensive and interactive, this session may be divided into several meetings.

What is a significant gift you have received which has made a difference in your life?

Encourage individual responses to this question.

What is a gift that you have offered which has made a difference in someone else's life?

Again, encourage individual responses to this question.

If you were part of this film, what would your hands hold as a symbolic gift to all of us?

Again, encourage individual responses to this question.