



03 - Generosity - the gift of open hands

This document is an extract from the full chapter, which is available for download in the table via this link: <https://raft2freedom.org/raft-to-freedom-downloads/>

If beings knew, as I know, the results of giving and sharing, they would not eat without having given, nor would the stain of miserliness overcome their minds.

- Gotama (the Buddha), Dāna Sutta (Iti 26)

Having surveyed the dangerous shore, we gather the first material for our raft: generosity. Far more than giving things away, generosity here means an open-hearted way of being - the deliberate antidote to the tightness and self-contraction that craving and reactivity bring.

Generosity begins with ourselves. Just as a sailor tends their own vessel before setting out, we practise self-compassion - care, forgiveness, and the willingness to start again - before extending that same open hand outward, to friends, strangers and community alike.

Every small act of generosity, however modest, is a conscious step toward the safe shore. The [Five Gifts](#) we turn to next are themselves an expression of this same generosity, formalised as a commitment to harmlessness.

Self-reflections

Take a few moments for honest self-inquiry, approaching these questions with a caring and curious mind:

1. When have my own patterns of craving, avoidance, or self-doubt limited my capacity to be generous - with things, time, or my presence? What did those inner constraints or conflicts feel like? ([view card](#))
2. Recall a time I offered genuine generosity, to myself or another. How did this act change my internal weather? Did giving feel different from surrendering to old habits or cravings? ([view card](#))
3. How might I cultivate an 'open heart, open hands, open mind' today, in small moments? ([view card](#))

4. Pause for a moment: what plank of generosity will I lay down today? ([view card](#))
5. When has receiving generosity from someone else been difficult for me? What made it hard to accept, and what would it mean for me to receive more openly? ([view card](#))
6. What would it look like for me to extend the same generosity to myself that I offer so readily to others? ([view card](#))
7. Where does my sense of *not enough* show up most strongly in daily life, and how might a single act of generosity loosen its grip? ([view card](#))

Journaling prompts

1. **Binding your raft:** Describe your vision of lasting freedom or authentic well-being. How does practising generosity, in any form, bind your raft and carry you closer to that vision?
2. **What happens when you give:** Write about a recent time when giving (whether material, attention, time, or care) brought you a sense of deep peace or clarity. What sensations or feelings arose?
3. **Self-care on the journey:** What act of self-generosity today would serve as a fresh plank for your raft, steadying you for the onward journey?
4. **Creating connections:** How might generosity, extended to others, create ropes of connection and reduce isolation? Who can you offer a gift of presence or support to today?
5. **The gift of presence:** Write about a time someone gave you their full, undivided attention. What did that feel like? How might you offer that same gift to someone this week?
6. **Loosening the grip of not enough:** Where does the feeling of not having, being, or doing enough show up most often? Write about one small act of giving that might loosen its hold.
7. **The gift you already carry:** What wisdom, skill, or insight have you gained on this journey so far that could be freely shared with someone else? Write about what holds you back, and what it might mean to offer it.

For a printable reminder to carry this stage's practice into daily life, see the Daily Intentions card: <https://raft2freedom.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/appropriate-response-daily-intentions.png>

Remember to remember

Generosity (dana) lies at the heart of our journey from suffering to freedom. It is the open-handed, open-hearted practice that gathers the first materials of our raft:

with every act of giving, we bind a plank with kindness and compassion, and make our vessel a little more resilient for the voyage ahead.

Generosity is the first active step from pain toward freedom, and it costs us nothing we cannot spare. Every open hand, every shared story, every small kindness to ourselves strengthens the vessel we sail in - and the more we give, the lighter the journey becomes.

Attention is the rarest and purest form of generosity.

- Simone Weil, letter to Joë Bousquet, 13 April 1942 (widely published in *Gravity and Grace*)

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