

One of the beauties of the imagination is that it takes place out of sight, internally. This is especially useful in our initial efforts because we need not be concerned about what others think. Unless you tell them no one knows what's going on inside of you.

So, here is an exercise in imagination.

Sometimes when we go to visit with friends we bring a gift. As we become acquainted with our inner friend we will make a point to offer something. What to give? Think of it this way: if some important dignitary was coming to visit you and you had to give them a present, you would make sure that the gift was something of quality, beauty, and value. You wouldn't just pull something down off of the shelf and throw it to them, or regift something that you did not want. This is even more true for our most precious of friends.

People always say of gifts that "it is the thought that counts". In this offering exercise that is a profound truth because what we will be giving are thoughts. So, what to give? It could be anything. For example, I made some banana bread this morning. The act of making it was my gift. With each ingredient, I measured mindfully. I didn't rush. I listened to the music that was playing from my iPod. I smelled the fragrance of the overripe bananas as I mashed them with the fork. I felt the tension in my forearm in the mashing process. In other words my conscious offering was this fully lived and experienced moment. My gift was as perfect as I could make it. Really, the gift had little to do with the bread. It was more like a garland of thoughts and awareness strung together and presented in the act of making bread. However, it was only the intention to offer this specific moment that made any of this possible.

I, too, received a gift in return. The gift to me was a certain stillness and sense of an enfolding grace during the time that I was making the bread. Presence would be the word I would use to describe the feeling. It lingered and colored my day long after the bread was baked and eaten. A side benefit was that everyone enjoyed the bread.

So now, what do I give? This block, mindfully walked, I give to you. This phone call, this meal, this drive, this meditation, this cup of coffee. It all becomes sacred when offered to the friend.