

Write Love Month Guide Book

What's This About?

This is **not** a Valentine's Day thing! If you like that holiday, awesome, yet

Write Love Month is about communicating and connecting through the simple act of a handwritten note.

We use the entire month as an opportunity to practice saying what is true for you to those in your life. They are thrilled to have any little piece of you. And here you get to get quite good at being generous in that way, and empathetic.

Let's define some things.

>Possible Definitions<

Love – The feeling of affinity, affection, appreciation, and connection (among other things)

Appreciation – recognizing what something or someone is or has done, that you like, or feel has positively impacted you or the world; the experience of liking something consciously

Empathy – Imagining what it is like to be another person so vividly that you and your relationship to that person are forever changed

Now for fun, every day spend a bit of time trying out each of these consciously. Just be present to the love of your children, or mother, or sister. Now try to walk around in appreciation. "How great is it that there's air conditioning in the Starbucks I'm waiting in line at?!" Then try the hard one: Empathy. Imagine what it was like to be your mother when she was your age. Then your spouse. Then the hard ones: A stranger in a distant neighborhood with opposing political views.

These practices themselves are transformative. You won't have the same day afterwards. Now imagine if you could take that feeling and transfer it to another's brain for them to savor?

That's where you and your handwriting come in!

Why Handwriting?

I do not have and have not historically had 'good' handwriting. Reading it can be an effort of love. In High School I would write poetry for strangers and hand them my 'art'. Even though they may not have understood them, every person I shared with was somewhere between awed and thrilled.

We read more now as a society than ever, but both the medium (screens) and quantity have a huge impact on the quality of the experience. Reading an email from someone can be nice, but we've replaced older styles of communication with convenience. That's not a bad thing, but there is a cost.

What I choose to communicate is also impacted by the medium. A face to face conversation is quite distinct from a YouTube comment.

When my wife reads one of my notes, a few things happen. She becomes present to the experience of my love for her. She gets that empathetic experience of being me and feeling how crazy for her I am. She also gets to heal all those parts of her brain that were trained to chant little untruths, like, "You're unlovable".

This month isn't about proving anything to anyone. Rather, it is about revealing yourself and your appreciation or love for them. I promise you, there is no greater gift.

Anatomy of a Great Note

Have you ever been having a really great conversation with someone? Chances are you thought it was great because you felt the person you were with was really listening to you. A great note does that. It is saying something, but when people feel acknowledged and appreciated, they feel heard. They feel understood. They may even feel validated. What a gift.

Every great note is different, but here are some things that could be considered necessary: **Acknowledgment**

This where you directly share that you noticed something someone is or has done. It could be a compliment, a thanks, or just a description. But great acknowledgements have a few more elements.

Share how you're different now.

"Knowing that you are out there doing this thing in the world has forever changed my relationship with women."

"Before you hired me, I was considering changing careers. That you hired me not only saved my career, it saved my life."

"I didn't know how good coffee could be. I was in a dark, grayscale world without verve. And then I walked into your shop. Since then I've been like a schoolboy every morning, so excited that I get to have the experience of a great work of craft that is part of this amazing chain of farmers and you guys. Thank you for saving my mornings!"

Be Generous, Grateful + Gracious. I love gratitude. A lot. It's probably my favorite way of being. Being grateful can feel like generosity, too. And grace. They are related.

I use generosity when I'm feeling stingy with myself. It is a necessary ingredient in sharing yourself. Grace is something you give. Give yourself. Give others. It's the freedom to be themselves and withhold the critical, harsh things that you could say (even if it's true).

Be present to them when you write. What they did they do. What it was like for them when they did it, and the difference it made with you. It's almost like an altered state. Take a few moments and just connect to who they are. Enjoy a few breathes as you swim around in those thoughts. Something to say will come, especially with practice.

Write out your note. Practice writing in a journal 100% of the time unless it's a short thank you. Mine is a Rhodia. This helped me a lot with phrasing, spacing, length. It doesn't take longer if you consider having to rewrite things if you messed up.

How Do You Eat an Elephant?

Developing a new habit is hard. Doing something new can be awkward, frustrating, hard. Eating an elephant is much the same. You accomplish both by taking one bite at a time.

1. **Make Your List** - List out about 40 people you love or appreciate. If they come to mind, put them down! Normally people will get blocked around 20, but just keep sitting there. You definitely have 40. (Make sure to name individuals, not groups.)
2. What will you **say**? Make a note by each name, let this inspire who else you'd like to add to the list :)
3. What medium would you like to **write on**? (i.e. Stationary, post cards, pre-printed sentiment cards (my favorite!))
4. **When** will you write? - Ponder the scheduling, mornings, lunch break, right before you sleep (also my fav)
5. **Who** would you like to do this project with? Sharing is way more fun!

Set Yourself Up to Succeed

As many of you know, developing habits is a challenging process. We all arrive at the start of a new skill with our unique collection of traits and liabilities. That makes a stock answer impossible for the author and risky for the reader. With that said, here are some tips:

1. Some people thrive on daily routines. 5am for this, followed by this, then that. I've never worked well on that kind of schedule.
2. If not a daily time, you need a **space**. Regardless of whether a daily time works or not, we each need a space that we can make our own. A certain computer, a room, a coffee shop; **we need a home for the new habit**.
3. Buy anything you need **now**: Stamps, envelopes, cards.
4. Make it a practice. If you remember: STOP! and write. Even if you don't feel like you're in the mood, do it.
5. Developing all new practices **must** be free of the drug we are all addicted to: **Inspiration**.

When you're *not* inspired, you'll come up with all kinds of reasons to not share yourself. Do you believe you *don't have enough to say*? Well, there's only one way to test that: **Write some stuff to someone and see!** *Not enough time?* Test that too: **Sit down and see if you don't have enough time to finish a note.**

6. And above all, make it fun. Sharing yourself is addictive once you get the hang of it and over the hurdles we human beings have in being free and feeling safe to say what is true for us.

That also means to not be hard on yourself! Miss a day? So what?! Chuckle and get back in the saddle.

Try this:

1. Take out a sheet of paper
2. Write someone's name at the top
3. Start writing something you appreciate about them (that you may have never told them)
4. + Envelope + Stamp + Mailbox = Amazing Heart Warmth

The Unopenable Box

When you write a note that acknowledges someone for something that makes a clear difference with them. But don't forget that when you are present to love, gratitude, generosity, and another person, **you are changed, too**. That means when you are writing a note, you are taking care of yourself also.

That also means you can write notes to people who are no longer alive, or for whom you don't have an address.

This is where our PO BOX Box comes in. Local artist, Patrick Renner has made us an unopenable box and I've started a PO Box for you to send your letters. The box will also be at most meet ups!

Your letters go in the box, unmolested, and in late March, we will have a Burning Box party at my home, where we create a bonfire and burn the box. Then Patrick will make another one for next year!

Unopenable Box PO Box Address:

PO Box 55843
Houston, TX 77255

Community!

You are not alone and it's way more fun to remember that! Invite people personally to join WLM and participate on any level.

Share your story and experience on fb, Instagram or blogging.

It's amazing the difference letting people into your life makes. Maybe some people will be awkward and not join you in this little project, but even if one person writes just a few letters, the propagating waves of kindness and appreciation will be worth it.

Share yourself, lovely person. You'll both be glad you did!

More Frequently Asked Questions

for which the answer is "YES!"

- Could I begin the month late?
- What if I miss a day: Can I just pick up where I left off?
- Could I do this any month, not just February?
- Can I do my own meet-up?
- Can I use the logo for my own events?
- Can I write more than one letter a day?
- Can I just keep going, writing notes forever?
- Will you do this every year?
- Will you continue to develop and grow the idea of WLM and share, update, allow it to evolve?
- Can I help you this year or next?
- Can I mail the Unopenable Box PO Box past Feb?
- Can I high-five you when next we meet?

Recommendations

Start buying what you need! Support your local shops.

Great Shops in Houston:

Noted – noteddesignco.com – 1901 Lawrence / 77008

Anvil Cards – anvilcards.com - 2356 Bissonnet / 77005

Dromgoolies – dromgoolies.com – 2515 Rice Blvd. / 77005

Come to the Sunday Meetups from 1-3pm!



Feb 1 @ Noted – *Kick-Off Party!* 6-8:30pm

Feb 3 @ Yoga Better Studio –

2000 Edwards, #309

Feb 10 @ Dromgooles - Yay!

Feb 17 @ ?

Feb 24 @ ?

What we do? We sit, we talk,

and create the space where you can focus and write.

I bring the stamps and some neat supplies if you need.

You buy the cards, paper, and bring your thoughtfulness.

See you there