



## Gifts from the Heart: MOVEMENT Activity

**Gabrielle Kaufman, MA, LPCC, BC-DMT, NCC**

**Board certified dance/movement therapist and licensed professional clinical counselor, Gabrielle Kaufman, provides an art activity centered on the topic of giving that can be done individually, or with family and friends. This activity also demonstrates how the process of creative expression can be used to bring meaning, self-understanding, empathy, connection to others, and other benefits.**

The holidays can be an overwhelming time. Our energies are often focused on the material gifts that we need and not the emotional ones that we possess. As well, the layers of memories, expectations, nostalgia and loss can often be confusing and difficult to balance. This exercise is geared at slowing down and focusing on what is most important:

1. Find a comfortable space with minimal distractions. Set a timer for 5 minutes. Sit and focus on your breath. Pay attention as your breath flows in and out of your mouth, throat, lungs, chest and whole body. Take a few minutes to do nothing but breathe and don't worry about your thoughts; they are just thoughts.
2. Imagine you have a large lump of clay in front of you. Use your hands to knead the clay and soften it. Work this clay until you feel you can create something that is representative of you. No one else has to know about this sculpture, it is only yours. *Please be aware, yours may not be a material gift, but possibly an idea, experience, emotion.*
3. This sculpture is your gift to yourself. Admire it, hold it, talk to it, cherish it.
4. Then, just as it appeared from imaginary clay, it will remain in your thoughts.
5. Return to the present, aware that you have created and given yourself the perfect gift.

### **Adaptation for Families and Friends**

1. Gather in a circle together (so you can clearly see one another).
2. Determine the first person who will be given imaginary clay. Invite her/him to create a gift out of this clay for someone in the room.
3. Have this person deliver the gift and the other person receive it.
4. The recipient will then take his/her own clay and build a gift for someone else.

5. Continue until all participants have given and received gifts.

**Reflection:**

How did you decide what to give yourself or others?

How did you feel receiving it?

What was it like letting it go?

Did anything surprise you about this activity?

How could you do a “mini-version” of this activity?

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**Gabrielle Kaufman, MA, LPCC, BC-DMT, NCC** is a dance/movement therapist and licensed professional clinical counselor with over 20 years experience in the helping profession. Currently, she is Director of Training and Technical Assistance for the Los Angeles County Perinatal Mental Health Task Force. Prior to this, she served as Director of the New Moms Connect Program of Jewish Family Service of Los Angeles providing services to new parents, particularly those suffering from symptoms of postpartum depression. Gabrielle is an instructor for the [UCLArts and Healing Social and Emotional Arts Certificate Program](#) and has served as chair of credentials for the [American Dance Therapy Association](#). She serves as Los Angeles coordinator for Postpartum Support International and also has a private practice in Los Angeles providing services in both English and Spanish. To learn more, visit [www.gabriellekaufman.com](http://www.gabriellekaufman.com).

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