

Book of Love



WOMEN
OF COLOR
IN THE
ACADEMY



“

When we can see ourselves as we truly are and accept ourselves, we build the necessary foundation for self-love... whether we learn how to love ourselves and others will depend on the presence of a loving environment. Self-love cannot flourish in isolation.

”

bell hooks
All About Love: New Visions. Harper Perennial

As we celebrated throughout the Return to Love Conference, bell hooks contributed much of her thoughts and knowledge to the world.

As a feminist and professor, many of her books focus on relationships and love. bell hooks taught us that “Knowing how to be solitary is central to the art of loving. When we can be alone, we can be with others without using them as a means of escape.” This book provides evidence-based practices for cultivating love of self and others through the Five Love Languages.¹ To begin to explore the five love languages, [take this quiz to discover your primary love language](#), what it means, and how you can use it to better connect with your loved ones.

¹Gordon, S. (2022, January 23). [What Are the Five Love Languages?](#) Verywell.

“

Care and affirmation, the opposite of abuse and humiliation, are the foundation of love. It is a testimony to the failure of loving practice that abuse is happening in the first place.

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bell hooks,
All About Love: New Visions. Harper Perennial

LOVE LANGUAGE #1:

Words of Affirmation: express affection through spoken words, praise, and appreciation

Research shows that self-affirmation – focusing on important qualities that make us who we are – has powerful effects that can minimize the anxiety, stress, and defensiveness that are associated with threats to our sense of self while keeping us open to the idea that there is room for improvement.² Below are activities and practices that you can implement to express words of affirmation.



Circle 3 phrases that you will use this week to affirm who you are.

1. I deserve to feel safe, comfortable, and confident in this body.
2. I am worthy of accomplishment, success, and abundance.
3. I accept myself the way I am.
4. My mind is clear of self-doubt, and I am ready to embrace every challenge that comes my way.
5. Everywhere I go, I attract joy and happiness.
6. I am at peace with my body.
7. I allow love to fill every inch of my skin, and I will embrace the warmth this love gives to me.
8. I have all the happiness, love, and positive energy I need today to have the most amazing day.
9. I am grateful to be living in this divine female body.
10. If my body requires healing, I will take joy in doing it.
11. My body is a tremendous gift, and I will treat it with love and kindness.
12. My body is my responsibility, and I will do what's best for me.
13. I trust that I have the capability to achieve my goals.
14. The world is filled with endless opportunities for me.
15. I embrace being a woman.
16. I recognize all the blessings in my life, and each of them fills me with joy.
17. I choose the happiness of this moment over the pain of the past.
18. Every challenge I face is an opportunity to grow and improve.

² Legault, L. (2012, October 24). [Self-Affirmation Enhances Performance, Makes Us Receptive to Our Mistakes](#). Association for Psychological Science.

Ways to practice words of affirmation for self

- Write a letter to your body.
- Focus on positive self-talk.
- Add an affirmation to your lock screens.
- Journal about your positive attributes.
- Unfollow social media accounts that make you feel bad about yourself.
- Follow social media accounts that uplift you.

Ways to practice words of affirmation for others

- Use meaningful phrases.
“I believe in you because ____.”
“You always make the people around you feel loved by ____.”
“I’ve never met anyone as ____ as you.”
- Compliment someone.
- Write a love note.
- Tell someone you love them.

LOVE LANGUAGE #2:

Quality Time: give your undivided attention

Individuals who engage in self-care take part in activities to “treat” themselves.³ Self-care has been used to reduce burnout, fatigue, and stress.⁴ In addition, self-care can be practiced with others.⁵ Self-care involves mindfulness, where individuals focus their attention on an experience and approach life “with a sense of curiosity, acceptance and openness.”⁶ Self-care and care of others are expressions of quality time. Below are self-care activities you can participate in by yourself and with others.



Plan 3 things you are going to do in May with yourself and with others.

^{3,4,5} Wyatt, J. P., & Ampadu, G. G. (2022). [Reclaiming self-care: Self-care as a social justice tool for Black wellness](#). *Community Mental Health Journal*, 58(2), 213-221.

⁶ Ramasubramanian, S. (2017). [Mindfulness, stress coping and everyday resilience among emerging youth in a university setting: a mixed methods approach](#). *International Journal of Adolescence and youth*, 22(3), 308-321.

Practice quality time with yourself

- Take yourself on a date.
- Go for a drive.
- Go for a walk.
- Start a new hobby or project.
- Watch a movie.
- Schedule alone time.
- [For more ideas](#)

Practice quality time with others

- [Practice active listening.](#)
- Try a new restaurant or recipe.
- Go on a walk after dinner.
- Plan a picnic without phones.
- Play board games or video games.
- [For more ideas](#)

LOVE LANGUAGE #3:

Acts of Service: do nice things; make someone's life easier; actions speak louder than words.

Those with Acts of Service as their love language feel loved and appreciated when someone does nice things for them to make their life easier. This can also be a gesture like remembering an important date. Beyond the feeling, empirical research demonstrates that altruism and volunteering have mental and physical health benefits including increased longevity and happiness.⁷ Below are ideas for practicing acts of service.



Take 5 minutes and clean up your work area.

Practice acts of service for yourself

- Do a task you have been avoiding.
- Say no to something you do not have time for.
- Volunteer for a cause you believe in.
- Make yourself a meal.
- Tidy up your living space.

Practice acts of service for others

- Prepare a meal.
- Do someone else's chore.
- Surprise someone with their favorite activity, snack, trip.
- Run errands for someone.

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To begin by always thinking of love as an action rather than a feeling is one way in which anyone using the word in this manner automatically assumes accountability and responsibility.

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bell hooks

All About Love: New Visions. Harper Perennial

⁷ Grimm, R. Jr., Spring, K., & Dietz, N. (2007). [The Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research](#), Corporation for National and Community Service.

⁷ Post, S.G. (2007). [Altruism and Health: Perspectives from Empirical Research](#), Oxford University Press.

⁷ Ben-Shahar, T. [Museum of Science, Boston]. (2006, October 4). [Positive Psychology: The Science of Happiness](#). [Video]. YouTube.

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One of the best guides to how to be self-loving is to give ourselves the love we are often dreaming about receiving from others. There was a time when I felt lousy about my over-forty body, saw myself as too fat, too this, or too that. Yet I fantasized about finding a lover who would give me the gift of being loved as I am. It is silly, isn't it, that I would dream of someone else offering to me the acceptance and affirmation I was withholding from myself. This was a moment when the maxim "You can never love anybody if you are unable to love yourself" made clear sense. And I add, "Do not expect to receive the love from someone else you do not give yourself."

”

bell hooks
All about love: New visions. Harper Perennial

LOVE LANGUAGE #4:

Gifts: a heartfelt gift makes them feel most loved; it's the thought that counts.

This love language is not about materialism. Small or big, tangible or intangible, those with this love language receive love when given something that is specifically for them based on their values, desires, and quirks. They see you and adore the person you are. The science behind gift giving encompasses many psychosocial constructs including identity, similarity, and rituals.⁸ Moreover, giving gifts sparks gratitude, the “social glue that fortifies relationships—between friends, family, and romantic partners—and serves as the backbone of human society.”⁹ Below are activities and practices to promote gift giving.



Buy/Make/Save for something that you have been wanting for a while.

Something for yourself

- Start a gratitude practice/journal.
- Start a project that excites you.
- Plan for a trip to somewhere you have always wanted to visit.
- Order takeout from a new restaurant.
- Buy yourself a beautiful and fragrant bouquet of flowers.
- Invest in yourself by starting a new hobby.

Something for others

- Bring them their favorite flowers, just because.
- Buy them something they've been wanting for awhile.
- Send them a surprise care package at work.
- Make someone a playlist.
- Sign them up for a class they've been wanting to take.
- Bake something for someone.
- Start a gratitude practice with a family member or friend.

⁸ Kotamarthi, P. [The Behavioral Science Guide to Gift Giving](#). The Decision Lab.

⁹ Allan, S. (2018, May). [The Science of Gratitude](#). Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley.

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Dominator culture has tried to keep us all afraid, to make us choose safety instead of risk, sameness instead of diversity. Moving through that fear, finding out what connects us, reveling in our differences; this is the process that brings us closer, that gives us a world of shared values, of meaningful community.

”

bell hooks
Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope

LOVE LANGUAGE #5:

Physical touch: nothing speaks more deeply than appropriate physical touch.

Physical touch and affection promote an emotional connection and feelings of warmth and comfort. From fist-bump to full body hugs, physical touch does not just signal safety and trust but actually elicits physical responses like lowering blood pressure and stress while boosting the immune system and signaling the release of oxytocin, “the love hormone.”¹⁰ In fact, studies show that all of these health benefits and more can come from just a 30 second hug.¹¹ Below are activities and practices to increase physical touch.



Take 2 minutes and stretch.

Practice physical affection for self

- Join a Yoga class.
- Take a bubble bath or warm shower.
- Create a skin care routine.
- Get a professional massage or visit a spa.
- Get physical exercise.
- Sleep with a weighted blanket.
- Give yourself a scalp massage.

Practice physical affection for others

- Hug for at least 30 seconds each day.
- Make time to cuddle.
- Hold hands.
- Learn to give a good massage.
- Take a dance class together.

¹⁰ Ditzen, B., Hoppmann, C., & Klumb, P. (2008, October). [Positive couple interactions and daily cortisol: on the stress-protecting role of intimacy](#). Psychosomatic Medicine.

¹¹ Cirino, E. (2018, April 11). [What Are the Benefits of Hugging?](#) Healthline.



How to Give Good Hugs

The first step of giving a good hug is knowing when to hug. Hugs are not always appropriate – but when someone really needs a hug, you can make their day by stepping in to embrace them. To give a good hug, you will need to create a warm and welcoming space for your hugging partner. Make them feel comfortable, loved, and supported. [Click this link for more information.](#)

1

Know when to hug.

There are times for hugging, and times for keeping your hands to yourself. First, understand why you are hugging this person. No matter the context, a good hug should feel natural. Wait for a break in the conversation, or a transition, or a poignant moment.

2

Be welcoming. Create a safe and gentle space. Use your body language, your facial expression, and your general demeanor to invite the person into your arms. Make this person feel like he or she is the only person who matters right now.

3

Open your arms to signal that you want to hug. Your body language should funnel the person into your embrace. Step toward them to make the invitation more clear. Look your hugging partner in the eyes, and watch their face to make sure that they are open to being hugged. If the person steps forward to meet your embrace, then they have accepted the hug. It's time to enter hug mode.

4

Consider announcing your hug. Say, “Can I hug you?” or “I want to hug you right now.” This can be a great segue if you are uncomfortable initiating a hug, or if you think that the other person might be uncomfortable with a sudden hug. By making your intentions clear, you may be able to clear the air and create a mutually comfortable space.

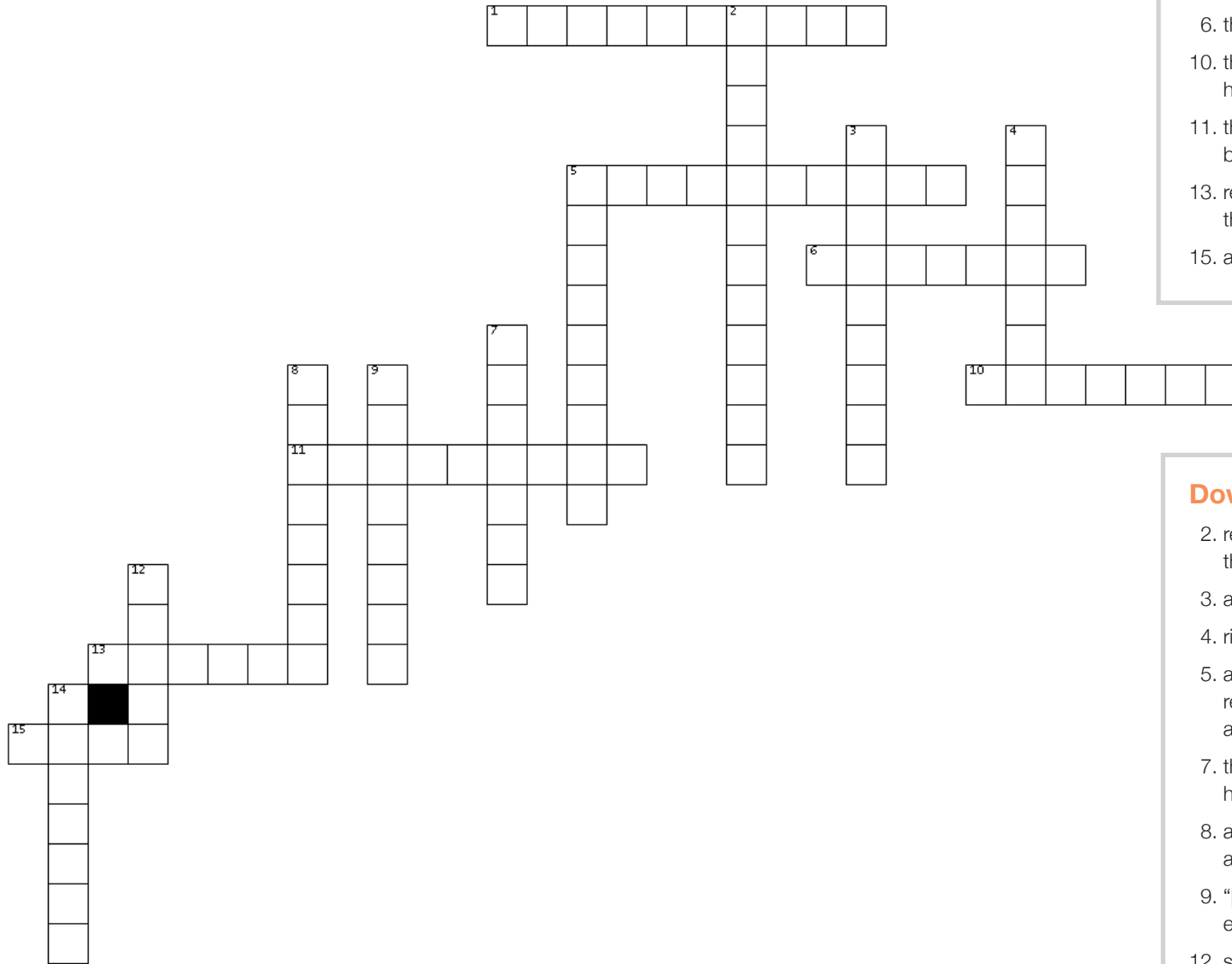
5

Be genuine. Don't expect anything from the hug other than warmth and a shared moment. If you are hugging with a warm heart and a genuine desire to make someone feel better, you will likely come across as friendly and welcoming.

6

Determine your hugging style. This will depend on your personality and who you happen to be hugging. Some people are able to fearlessly rock the bear hug. Others are subtler and less committal in their approach. Watch various people hug each other, and decide which hug is best for a given situation.

All About Love: New Visions Crossword Puzzle



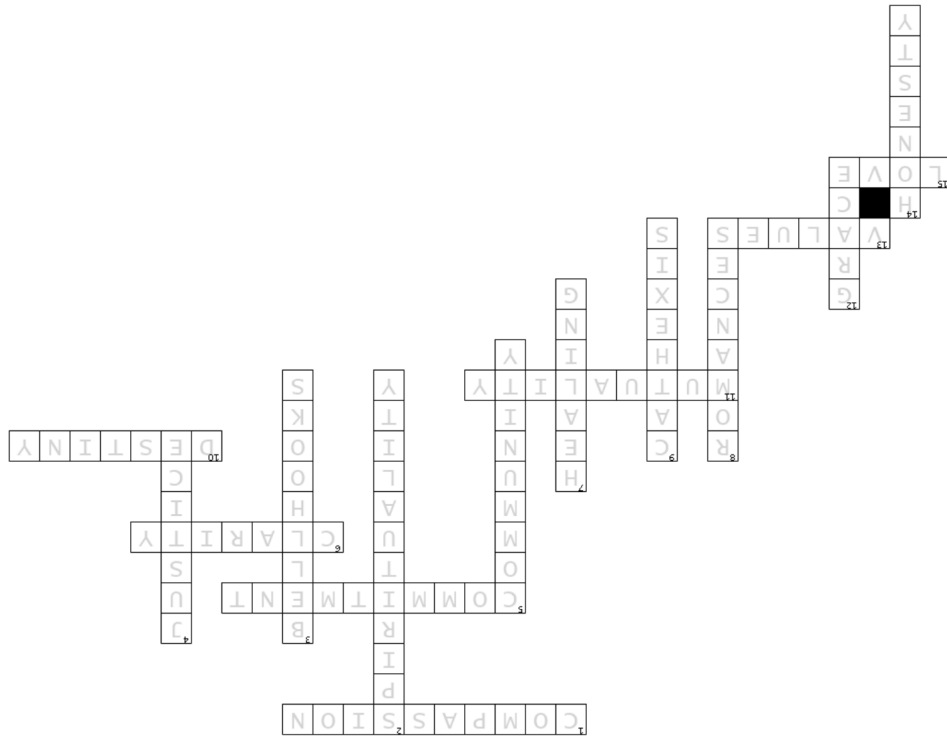
Across

1. sympathetic pity and concern for the sufferings or misfortunes of others
5. the state or quality of being dedicated to a cause, activity
6. the quality of being coherent and intelligible
10. the hidden power believed to control what will happen in the future; fate
11. the sharing of a feeling, action, or relationship between two or more parties
13. recognition of a feeling or sense or belief that there is something greater than myself
15. an intense feeling of deep affection

Down

2. recognition of a feeling or sense or belief that there is something greater than myself
3. author of *Auntie* a woman
4. righteousness, equitableness, moral rightness
5. a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals
7. the process of making or becoming sound or healthy again
8. a feeling of excitement and mystery associated with love
9. "[an] investment of mental or emotional energy in a person, object, or idea"
12. simple elegance or refinement of movement
14. free of deceit and untruthfulness; sincere

Answer Key



Thoughts, Notes, and Reflections

