



Give the Gift of Kindness and Hope

Background: This group activity can be done any time of year however it can also be a useful activity during occasions or times of year where giving may be expected or customary (such as a holiday). This group activity can be done in person or via telehealth. If done in person, group members will need pen and paper to secretly submit their thoughts and ideas in written “secret ballot” format to the group leader. If this is done via telehealth, group members should use the chat function on the telehealth platform and send messages privately via chat to the group leader.

Directions: In this group, members will give and receive two things: **thoughts of kindness** and **thoughts of hope**. Everything is done anonymously so group members can share their honest thoughts without feeling shy, reserved, or anxious

Someone in the group should volunteer to take the first turn. When it is a person's turn, the group messages will be directed toward that person. Everyone in the group should anonymously submit two messages: The first message, **a thought of kindness**, should be a kind statement or observation about the person whose turn it is. The second should be **a message of hope**. Submission should be done via private chat or secret ballot as described earlier. Once all are collected, the group leader will then, one by one, read the group's messages to the person whose turn it is. **Review the following rules first:**

- **Positive messages only.** This group is designed to be encouraging and fun, so this is not the time for group members to reveal secret gripes or resentments. Insults or criticism is not appropriate for this group. The counselor/group leader should not read a message that is mean-spirited, insulting, critical or that violates boundaries or is otherwise inappropriate. Positive messages of hope only should be acceptable. Again, this is supposed to be fun and positive. For example, a message such as “I hope you get what's coming to you” would not be an appropriate message of hope
- **Author of messages is to be kept secret** – If messages are kept anonymous then people can feel free to be more open and honest. The counselor/group leader should just read the messages but not announce the author or give any hints. Group members should refrain from saying “*I wrote that one!*”
- **For thoughts of kindness, complements are OK as long as they are appropriate** – For example it is okay to submit a message such as “You have a great smile” but it would not be appropriate to say, “I would like to date you” or to specifically make a sexually oriented comment. If possible, it is better to focus on personal qualities (intelligent, funny, outgoing, honest, etc.) rather than physical qualities
- **Messages of hope are better if they are realistic** – For example saying “I hope you win a billion dollars” is nice but not all that meaningful. Something specific to the person which is realistic and attainable is much better such as “I hope you to get the career you always wanted”

The group leader will read the thoughts of kindness and the thoughts of hope to the person who is up for their turn. Before ending a turn, **the person taking the turn should share with the rest of the group how they feel about the messages they received and comment on anything that may have stood out to them**

When a turn is over, switch to the next person and allow them to have a turn receiving positive messages from the rest of the group.

A general rule for the whole group is the old principle – “If you have nothing nice to say then don't say anything at all” - However, group participation is encouraged for all wherever possible