



# Year of Dāna

AN INTENTIONAL PATH FOR YOUR SABBATICAL

6 Step Checklist & 10 Guiding Principles



Insight   
Arising

# Why a Year of Dāna?

Dāna (pronounced dah-nuh) is a Sanskrit and Pali word for generosity. A Year of Dāna (YOD) is an intentional period of time focused on practicing generosity. Research shows the practice of giving is essential for living a life of joy and peace. Generosity is a heart and mind muscle that can be cultivated overtime with intention and attention. Learning how to give and receive with grace and ease will lay the groundwork for a lifetime of generous action and conscious living.

Practicing generosity helps us build other foundational life skills:

- Accepting things as they are
- Letting go and practicing non-attachment
- Developing compassion and empathy
- Deepening awareness of self and others
- Understanding the impermanent nature of life

Practicing generosity creates long-term benefits:

- Feeling positive about ourselves
- Helping others feel joyful and cared for
- Making an impact on a cause or organization
- Inspiring others to give
- Feeling cared for through receiving
- Improving relationships
- Fostering an attitude of gratitude and appreciation for life

# YOD Checklist

## 1. Define what generosity means to you

- Generosity is about giving AND receiving. What's harder for you?
- There are many things and people to practice with: yourself, other humans, living creatures, plants, Mother Earth, causes, and organizations.
- There are many ways to give and receive: time, energy, attention, mindfulness, creative work, coaching/mentorship, service, volunteering, wisdom, money, love, care, support.

### Guiding Questions:

- What are the ways you give/receive currently? To/from who?
- What aspect of giving/receiving has been missing for you?

## 2. Uncover your past and present experiences with generosity

- Tracing your experiences back to childhood is a good place to begin understanding your relationship with giving and receiving.

### Guiding Questions:

- Who was my first teacher in generosity?
- What special memories do I have of others giving to me?
- Think of a time you gave to something or someone. How did I feel giving then?
- What struggles do I have with giving/receiving?
- What fears or anxieties do I have around giving/receiving?



# YOD Checklist

## 3. Explore your intentions and inquiries

- It's important to name why you're taking a YOD and what you're seeking to learn about yourself in this intentional period of your life.
- Getting to the root of your motivation to give is essential. Are you giving to please or impress or meet expectations? Or from a sense of martyrdom? Or from a place of sincerity and joy?

### Guiding Questions:

- After a Year of Dāna, what do I hope will have changed in my life? How will I know?
- If I track my motivation across several acts of giving, what patterns do I notice?
- What does cultivating joy through generosity feel like in my heart and body?
- What does giving from a place of abundance look like instead of scarcity mindset?



# YOD Checklist

## 4. Identify your practice areas

- There may be particular areas of life to focus your generosity practice in. You'll want to deepen some areas or find new places you haven't spent time before.

### **Suggested focus areas:**

- Health and wellbeing
- Self-discovery
- Spiritual growth
- Family, friends, and colleagues
- Love and partnership
- Mother Earth and nature
- Art and creativity
- Meaningful causes
- Young people in your life

### **Guiding Questions:**

- What areas of my life would benefit from more joy and nourishment?
- What areas of my life are difficult to receive in? To ask for help in?



# YOD Checklist

## 5. Select your starting practices

- Be easy with yourself and choose 1-3 practices to start with. This effort is not about success or failure. You can always adjust practices and try new focus areas later.
- Start with small gestures and build up as you go along over a reasonable time period.
- Journal your experiences and observe how they impact your heart-mind-body.

### **Suggested practices:**

- I will give myself 1-2 hours to self-care, rest, and simply be weekly.
- I will give myself compassion and grace.
- I will make offerings to my altar and ancestors daily.
- I will give something very special to me to someone I care about weekly.
- I will practice acting on my generous impulse instead of holding back.
- I will volunteer time monthly for a cause or organization I care about.
- I will donate a meaningful amount to 3-5 causes or organizations.
- I will give undivided attention to a small child in my life.
- I will mentor a young person in my life for 6 months.
- I will create something with my hands and give it to someone I love.
- I will try a random act of kindness daily or weekly.
- I will practice asking for help from my family or friends.
- I will receive compliments or gifts gracefully.

### **Guiding Questions:**

- What connection with self or others do I experience in my practice?
- What did it feel like after the act of giving or receiving?
- How do others experience me when I give to them?
- What gets in the way of acting on my generous impulse?



# YOD Checklist

**6. Pick your care team and ask for support**

- This journey will be more fun with people cheering you on. Lean fully into the love and support of people who nourish you. Pick 2-3 people to share this journey with and express what you might need from them (e.g. check-ins, monthly celebrations)

**Guiding Questions:**

- Who do I admire for their generous ways?
- What support will I need for my YOD?
- What will help me take things slowly with these new practices?



# Ten Guiding Principles for your YOD

1. Filling your own vessel will allow you to more easily give or receive from a place of fullness rather than emptiness.
2. Try giving to yourself unabashedly! Explore how it feels. Be gentle with guilt.
3. Practicing generosity gives you permission to change and let go of your attachments.
4. Pay attention to how you're contracting or expanding when you give or receive.
5. Notice how giving or receiving impacts those around you.
6. Take stock in the discomfort and vulnerability in receiving from others.
7. Allow your practices to emerge naturally. Don't force things.
8. Notice what motivates you to give or what keeps you holding back.
9. Check-in with your heart as you practice generosity. How is she changing? Where do you feel joy in your body?
10. Be gentle and compassionate with your journey. Give yourself time!

**Book a Year of Dana coaching session at:**

**[www.insightarising.com](http://www.insightarising.com)**

**Read more about the original Year of Dana:**

**<https://www.insightarising.com/blog/a-year-of-dana>**

