Writing Primer: No more writer's block, regret, or procrastination

The What, Why, How, Who, & When of Sharing Gracenotes with People who Matter Most

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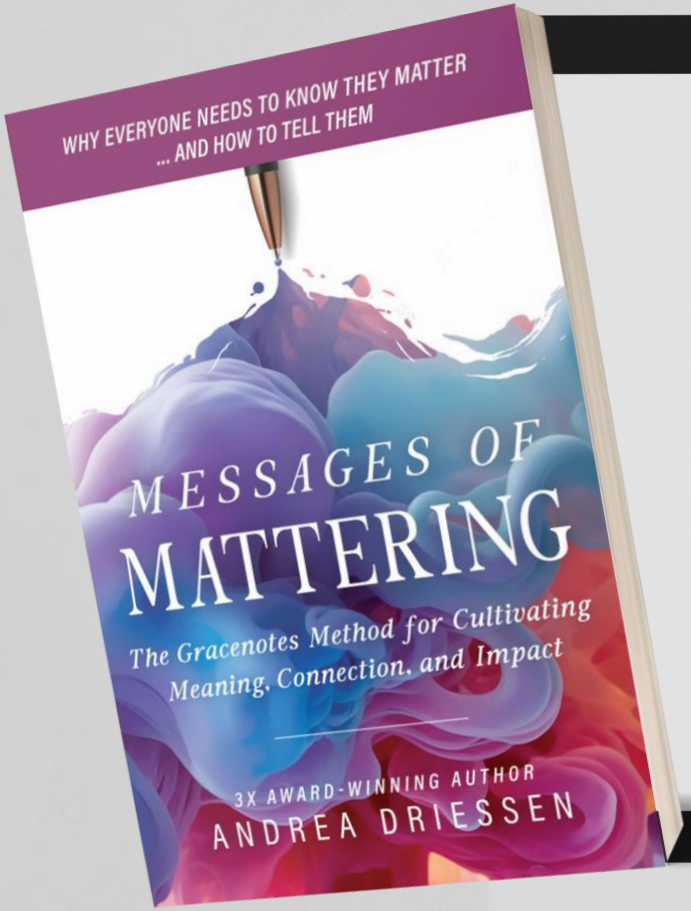


This Writing Primer is excerpted from the book *Messages of Mattering*.

Get your copy at Grace-notes.org/book

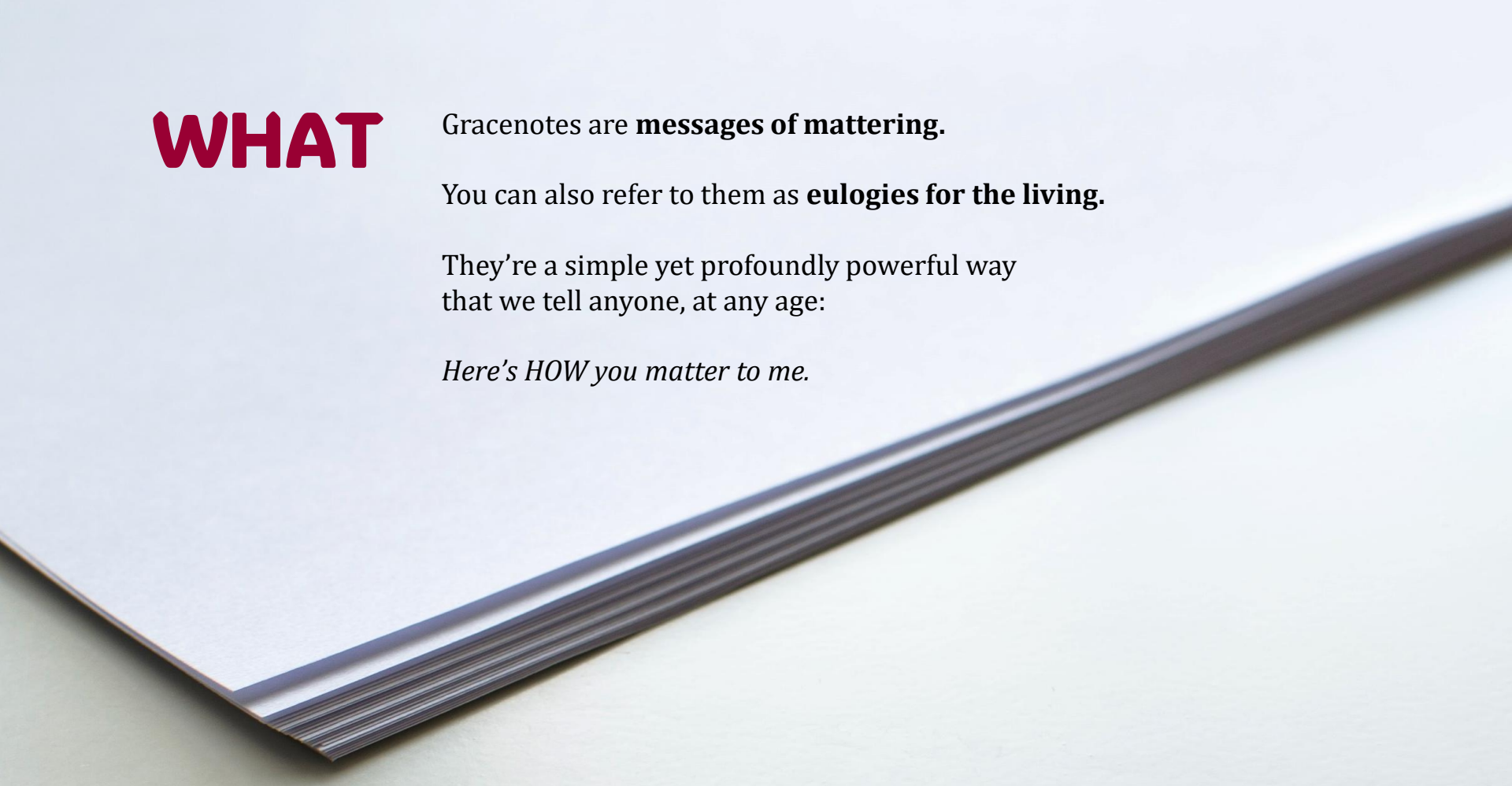
WHAT

Gracenotes are **messages of mattering.**

You can also refer to them as **eulogies for the living.**

They're a simple yet profoundly powerful way
that we tell anyone, at any age:

Here's HOW you matter to me.



"You shouldn't have to be dead to hear your eulogy read."
–Andrea Driessen, founder of the global Gracenotes movement

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WHY

When we know how we matter, we can live with more **impact, meaning and purpose.**

We can activate the legacies that others see possible in us.

"Gracenotes fuel our ability to live into a lasting legacy."

Gracenotes also help us:

- Feel more seen and heard
- Reduce regret
- Lessen loneliness—across generations
- Take smarter risks
- Improve focus, engagement, and trust
- Boost belonging—at work, at home, at anywhere
- Cultivate deeper meaning, especially in uncertainty
- Augment all the "mean" with *meaning*

HOW

Struggling to communicate your message?

6 ways to ease your process

"An antidote to anxiety is helping one another find meaning." –Andrea Driessen

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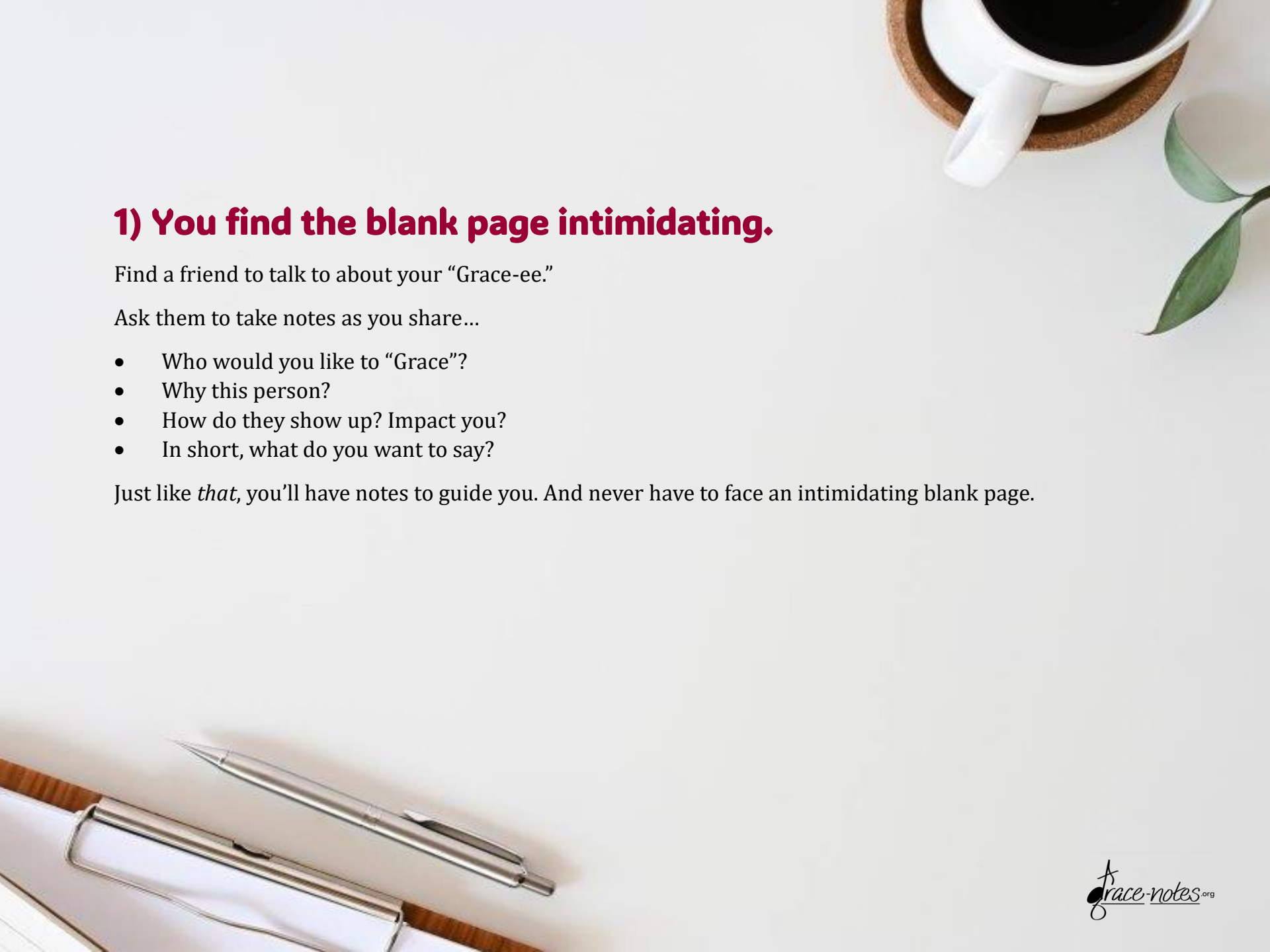


1) You find the blank page intimidating.

Find a friend to talk to about your “Grace-ee.”

Ask them to take notes as you share…

- Who would you like to “Grace”?
- Why this person?
- How do they show up? Impact you?
- In short, what do you want to say?

Just like *that*, you’ll have notes to guide you. And never have to face an intimidating blank page.

2) You're at a loss on where or how to begin.

A. Use a Gracenote writing prompt.

You'll find a list of **24 simple writing prompts** on the next page.

Any one of them can serve as a roadmap or a theme to guide and inform your note.

Pro tip: Don't try to use more than one or two from this list in any one Gracenote—you may come away feeling overwhelmed rather than inspired. You can also write your own prompt.

The last two prompts on the list…

- I saw ___ the other day, and thought of you…
- I know you haven't heard from me in a while, and/but…

…are ideal when you and your recipient have been **out of touch for quite a while**. And they can ease you into your note, and lessen or remove the perceived awkwardness of sending it.

B. Go card shopping.

Find a gorgeous card that reminds you of the person you'd like to "Grace." You can even allow the artfulness of the card to introduce your note: "I saw this lovely card, it reminded me of you, and it simply begged to have an equally lovely note inside…."

Writing Prompts

I always laugh when I think about _____

You are the only person I know who _____

You will leave a legacy around _____

When you enter a room, there is more _____

I deeply appreciate that you _____

I smile when I think of _____

You're the best at _____

Your superpower is _____

Around you, others feel _____

A book about you would be entitled:

_____

You are the go-to person for _____

Your secret weapon is _____

You can always be counted on for _____

One of your most memorable traits is _____

I often remember when you _____

You slayed the _____ dragon

Your passion around _____ is contagious

I turn to you when I need mentoring on _____

You set a superb example around _____

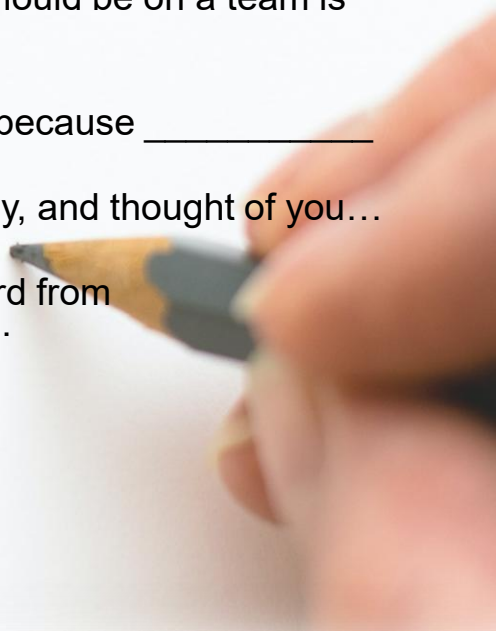
You should win a Nobel Prize for _____

The main reason you should be on a team is _____

You are my role model because _____

I saw ____ the other day, and thought of you…

I know you haven't heard from me in a while, and/but…



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3) You've got a pesky case of writer's block.

Whether you talk through ideas for your Gracenote with a buddy as suggested above, or you go solo, remember: you're not going for a job at a greeting card company. Or publication in a poetry anthology. Just do YOU.

Be gentle with yourself—give *yourself* some grace!—and just let your unedited words out on the page—what writers of all stripes call **free writing**. Do your best to put your annoying inner editor on the back burner, even for a bit.

Start small; don't overthink. You can always come back later (hours, days, a week) and edit.

Sometimes imagining how you'd feel if you *received* a Gracenote can be just the nudge that helps you along. Picture yourself holding a note that reflects how *you* matter in the world—and you may experience a kinesthetic shift in how you view the power of a Gracenote for your recipient—no matter the form it takes.

4) You and your "Grace-ee" are estranged.

Perhaps a big part of you wants to share a Gracenote-type message with someone, and things feel prickly between you.

Go ahead—draft that note—and send it in the **snail mail**, to *yourself*. Yes, this is a little counterintuitive. But trust me: a couple things happen here. Some time passes. You are a *slightly* different person when it comes in the mail.

As you open the envelope and read the note, you'll hold it as if you are the intended recipient.

You may at that point feel complete—and may experience a small or even a profound shift of energy with the other person. Your process may begin and end there.

As my kindred spirit Frish Brandt says: "Letters create completion even before you send them—time and space are bridged with words."

Or you may feel inspired to make a couple changes or send it along.

No matter *what* path you choose, your willingness to take this step can be a healing, forgiveness-rich, and regret-lessening experience. Trust the process—and trust *yourself*.

5) You're crunched for time.

Writing Gracenotes can require what I call **emotional bandwidth**: time to think about and do something that comes **more from the heart and less from the head.**

Modern life sometimes makes finding emotional bandwidth really hard. But it's valuable to make space for those quieter moments when we **stop our minds enough for our hearts to catch up.**

2 ways to *create* time:

- HABIT SWAP: Consider one of your habits. We all have 'em—there's no judgment. Could be social media, a TV series, or making a particular type of meal. Of *course* none of these is bad in and of itself, but spending a bit less time, just *once*, on just *one* thing, will automatically free up time in your mind and schedule.

- MEETING WITH SELF: We attend professional and personal meetings because these are often commitments on our *calendars.* What if you simply schedule a *meeting with yourself* to write your Gracenote? 20-30 minutes may be all you need if you have dedicated quietude to **write, journal, or go for a walk with a note pad**. Plus, just allowing ourselves to feel into ideas more deeply can help move us through them, and navigate any discomfort they bring up.

6) Writing is NOT your thing—and never will be.

If you are not inclined to write—if no amount of time in the *world* will make *writing* a Gracenote something you will do—know that Gracenotes come in all different shapes and sizes: **videos, short voice memos, photo collages, songs, slide decks, drawings, even delicious feasts!**

The *medium* doesn't matter. The *doing* matters.

There is simply NO WAY you can do a Gracenote "wrong." It's utterly *impossible*.

Whether you write it long form, type it out, use a calligraphy pen or an old pencil.

Whether you find special paper, or (as I once did) employ a used envelope in a pinch—trust that your missive **will** make a positive impact.

"Kindness doesn't demand perfection."
- Dr. Jane Tornatore

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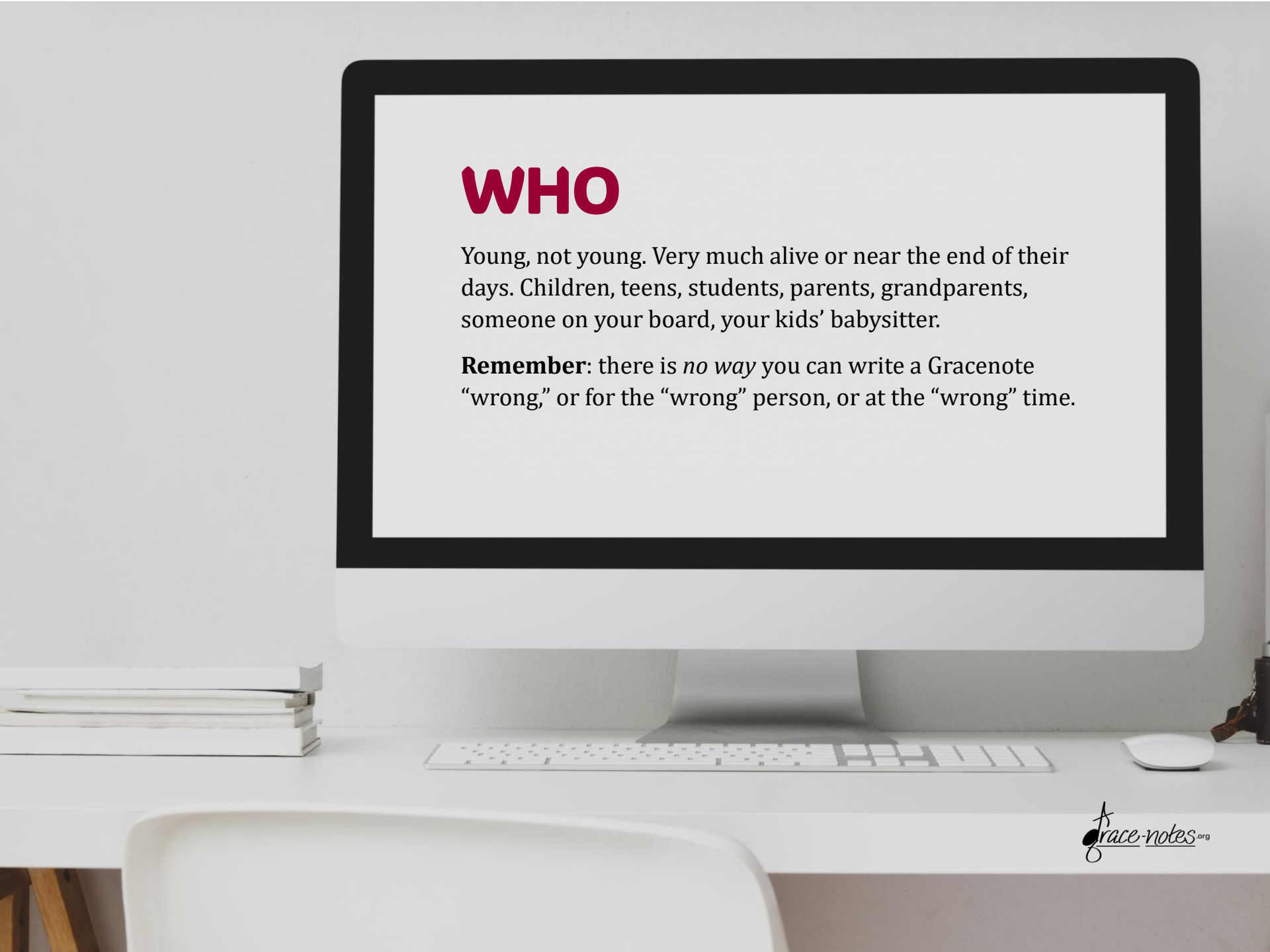
WHO
Young, not young. Very much alive or near the end of their days. Children, teens, students, parents, grandparents, someone on your board, your kids' babysitter.
Remember: there is *no way* you can write a Gracenote "wrong," or for the "wrong" person, or at the "wrong" time.
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WHEN

Maybe you haven't connected with someone in a long time, and it feels weird to reach out to them. Or you're concerned that someone who's aging will misinterpret your intentions (that your "living eulogy" is more about being an all-out, premature "eulogy"). Or the Gracee you have in mind doesn't seem like "the type" to read the sentiments you feel called to share. Very common, and very human, to have these reservations.

In these scenarios, we may need to *make* this time the "right" time to send your note. Try this:

Does your recipient love sushi? Send 'em their Gracenote on **World Tuna Day!**

Do they relish being on the water? Send them a Gracenote on **Regatta Day.**

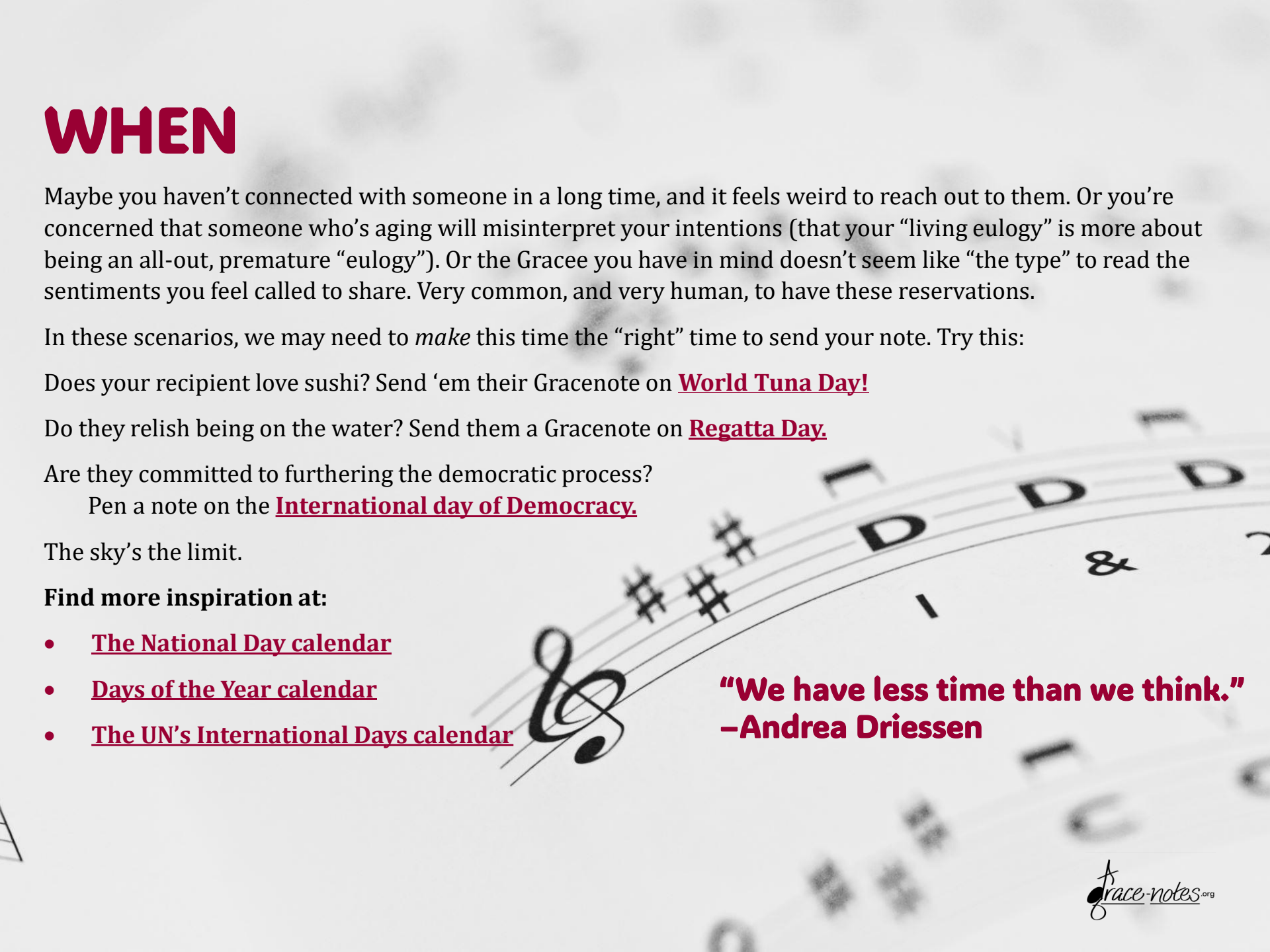
Are they committed to furthering the democratic process?
Pen a note on the **International day of Democracy.**

The sky's the limit.

Find more inspiration at:

- **The National Day calendar**
- **Days of the Year calendar**
- **The UN's International Days calendar**

"We have less time than we think."
–Andrea Driessen



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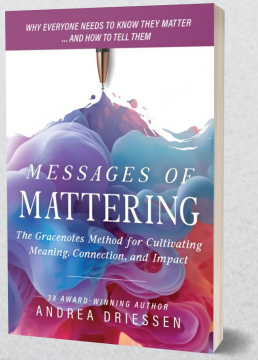
Still stuck?

Write me at **Engage@Grace-notes.org**. I promise to respond.

Wishing you **love and grace**—for yourself and everyone you touch.

Andrea Driessen,
Creator of Gracenotes

Bring a custom Gracenotes program to your workplace.

Get your copy of Andrea's book on Gracenotes: *Messages of Mattering: The Gracenotes Method for Cultivating Meaning, Connection, & Impact.*