

The Gift of Themselves

And when they say, I am going to eat ice cream
until I feel better, perhaps say, What flavor?
And when they say, I am going to cry myself to sleep,
perhaps say, May the night hold you as you cry.
What is it in us that wants to say, Don't cry?
And since when has trying to stop the tears worked, anyway?
My teacher speaks of the greatest gift:
to give a person themselves.
I think of when I told my friend I did not feel beautiful.
She did not rush to argue with me.
She let me outline my reasons. She hummed in soft agreement.
Her nods nourished me like a clear lake.
I threw my stones of self-doubt in its waters till it stilled.
So when they say, I feel terrible, perhaps say,
Yes, it is a difficult day. Perhaps add a knowing hum.
Add a nod. A hug if they want it.
And give them their own words,
how they shine like daylight,
bright enough they see, perfectly, themselves.

—Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer