

GIVING

is a very personal matter. Everyone has their favorite cause and their own motivations for giving. The good news is that giving is beneficial to the giver as well as the recipient. In fact, it's pretty good for the whole world. Here's why.

Everyone knows the tax benefits of giving. Our tax code is designed to encourage charitable giving by providing financial rewards to the giver. But that just scratches the surface.

Research shows that happy people give more. It also shows that giving makes people happier. The more you give the happier you become and the happier you become the more you give. That's a pretty positive feedback loop. So increased happiness is another reason to give.

Giving is also good for your health. Studies have established a connection between generosity and better health, even among the elderly and those with serious illnesses. Research also links volunteering and giving help and support to others with increased longevity. Want to feel better and live longer? Give to others.

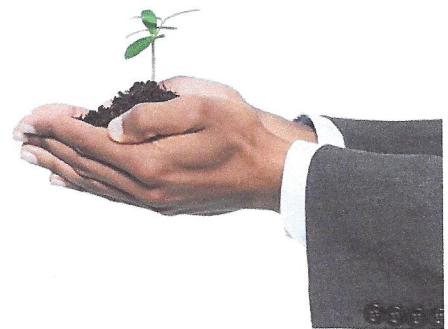
Those who give are more likely to get back. Studies show that when you give to others, you are more likely to be rewarded down the line—sometimes by the person you gave to, sometimes by someone else. Giving creates trust and cooperation between the giver and the receiver. Research shows that these positive social interactions foster mental and physical health.

Giving can be an expression of gratitude by the giver and it can evoke gratitude in the recipient. Research shows that gratitude has a positive impact on happiness, health and social bonds. Gratitude has also been linked with optimism and an overall sense of well-being.

There is also a chemical reason to give. Giving can induce the release of oxytocin, a hormone associated with feelings of warmth, euphoria and connection to others. Oxytocin causes people to feel more generous and empathetic. Those on an "oxytocin high" can jumpstart a "virtuous circle" where generosity in one, triggers generosity in another.

As it turns out, giving is downright contagious. Studies show that when one person behaves generously, it inspires generosity in others who observe that generosity. In fact, the researchers found that "each person...can influence dozens or even hundreds of people, some of whom he or she does not know and has not met." That's quite a ripple effect.

There is no shortage of people who can benefit from your generosity. And that includes you! So get your oxytocin flowing and spread your good cheer. The world could use a good dose of it. Who knows how far your ripples might extend?



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