The Season of Giving

This time of year is often called the Season of Giving, but we sometimes feel empty with the seemingly relentless focus on STUFF. Stuff is good, especially a carefully chosen gift for a specific loved one. However, consider choosing to give other things such as patience, kindness, encouragement, experiences or volunteer work. All of these, including meaningful “stuff” can make others feel happy and appreciated, but it also gives you a healthy boost as well:

* **It makes you happy.** Altruistic behavior releases endorphins and activates regions of the brain associated with pleasure, social connection, and trust, creating a “warm glow” effect. Watch this great international commercial on acts of kindness and how they can affect our (and others) daily interactions and experiences.

* **It’s good for your health.** Studies find that elderly individuals who provided practical help to friends, relatives, or neighbors, or gave emotional support to their spouses had a lower risk of dying over a five-year period than those who didn’t. This is probably due to the benefits of social connection such as feeling involved, attached and valuable as well as a lowering of blood pressure. Interestingly, receiving help wasn’t linked to a reduced death risk.

* **It promotes cooperation and social connection.** When you give, you are more likely to get. Altruistic exchanges promote a sense of trust and cooperation that strengthens our relationships to others leading to good mental and physical health.

* **It evokes gratitude.** Research has found that gratitude is integral to happiness, health and social bonds. It’s fitting that Thanksgiving is part of the holiday season as giving thanks is integral to the positive feelings associated with other observances of the holiday season. People who practice gratitude exercise more, are more optimistic, feel better about their lives overall, and have strengthened bonds with others.

* **It’s contagious.** A good contagion that we can spread through our worksite! Studies show that when one person behaves generously, it inspires observers to behave generously later, toward different people. Giving releases oxytocin, a hormone that induces feelings of warmth, euphoria, and connection to others. A dose of it will cause people to give more generously and to feel more empathy towards others with “symptoms” lasting up to two hours. Video: “[Kindness is Contagious](#)"

Webpages to Help you out in the Season of Giving

* [101 Easy Ideas for Random Acts of Kindness](#) Pick one and do it TODAY! Better yet, bookmark it and commit to do one a day.

* Learn about Happify, check out this Science of Giving [Infographic](#).

* Visit the [Growing Givers Page](#) with at home activities to promote empathy and social awareness in your children. Watch the Parent Webinar: Growing Givers– Raising Socially Responsible Children.

* Peruse the Greater Good [Altruism Page](#) with articles, science, books, quizzes and tips surrounding altruism.