

## Good Deeds

As we go into the commercialized holiday of Valentine's Day, many people's focus turns to romance and love. We are encouraged to give cards, gifts and flowers to show our love for the people we are closest to. But when is the last time you did something nice for someone you didn't know, for no reason at all?

Performing random acts of kindness has been shown to have immense benefits for the one performing them and of course, for the person being helped. In the movie "Pay It Forward, a middle school boy has a class assignment where the teacher challenges the students to come up with something that will change the world. The young boy decides to randomly do good deeds for complete strangers and then they would do the same. In these troubled times this is an incredibly refreshing idea.

In the book "The Health and Spiritual Benefits of Helping Others", the author Allan Luks, shares some significant findings of his research:

- 1. Helping others** contributes to the maintenance of good health and can diminish the effect of minor and serious psychological and physical diseases and disorders.
- 2. Helper's High:** The rush of euphoria, often referred to as a "helper's high" after performing a kind act, involves physical sensations and the release of the body's natural painkillers - the endorphins. The initial rush is followed by a longer period of calm and improved emotional well-being.
- 3. Benefits Linger:** The health benefits and sense of well-being return for hours or days whenever the helping act is remembered.
- 4. Helping Others helps us!:** Stress related health problems improve after performing kind acts. Helping others:
  - Reverses feelings of depression.
  - Supplies social contact.
  - Reduces feelings of hostility and isolation that can cause stress, overeating, ulcers, etc.
  - Decreases the constriction in the lungs that leads to asthma attacks.
- 5. Focus Out:** Helping can enhance feelings of joyfulness, emotional resilience, and vigor and can reduce an unhealthy sense of isolation.
- 6. Reduce Our Pain:** The awareness and intensity of physical pain can decrease.

7. **Improves Our Attitude:** Attitudes such as chronic hostility that negatively arouse and damage the body are reduced.

8. **Increase Our Self Worth:** A sense of self-worth, greater happiness, and optimism is increased, and feelings of helplessness and depression are decreased.

9. **Improve Our Immune System:** When we establish an “affiliative connection” with someone (a relationship of friendship, love, or some sort of positive bonding), we feel emotions that can strengthen the immune system. Caring for strangers leads to immense immune and healing benefits.

11. **A Degree in Caring:** Regular volunteering, being involved in a club or faith group, and entertaining is the happiness equivalent of getting a college degree, or more than doubling your income.

Refreshing indeed!

Hopefully this brightens your day!