

Selfishly selfless

Author: Vitality works

“You don’t need to commit a crime
to do community service”

Why be selfishly selfless?

When we think of the benefits of volunteering, the first thing that comes to mind is the impact of the volunteer activities on the health of the community and those being served. However, more and more research is demonstrating that we can get as much out of volunteering as the people we are giving our time for or to.

In fact, studies has shown that when we give to others it activates the areas of the brain associated with pleasure, social connection and trust.

Altruistic behaviour releases endorphins in the brain and boosts happiness for us as well as the people we help. Some studies have even shown that giving money away tends to make people happier than spending it on themselves. Basically, by giving to a cause or to helping others through volunteering and in other ways we can help reduce our risk of depression and anxiety and boost our personal wellbeing and happiness.

One country that seems to have embraced this concept is Denmark. In his book ‘The Blue Zones’, Author Dan Buettner outlines some of the reasons they believe Denmark is consistently rated among the world’s happiest countries. One of these reasons is their high participation rates in volunteering. They found that 30 percent of Danes volunteer their time to benefit their communities. This makes for a healthier society and helps people take the focus off their own troubles.

Next steps on being selfishly Selfless

Whether it's a one-off or something you do on a regular basis, volunteering is good all round. As well as making a positive contribution to the happiness of others, it's a great way to meet people, get the most out of your local area and to increase your own happiness and wellbeing.

“Volunteers do not
necessarily have
the time; they just
have the heart”
Elizabeth Andrew

Could your health
benefit from being
some community
service?



VITALITY WORKS
Sanitarium Workplace Health

If volunteering your services or time is something that you would like to do there are a few things you can do to get started. Check out the following two steps from the [Action for Happiness organisation](#) to get started.

Step 1:

Think about what sort of volunteering would work best for you practically. You are likely to make the biggest impact if it fits with our situation, likes and skills. A good place to get started is to think about:

- How much time am I able and willing to give?
- How regularly? E.g. once per week, per month, every other weekend?
- What skills am I willing to offer? (Often just a spare pair of hands or a friendly voice is enough)
- What skills might I like to learn?
- What would I enjoy doing? E.g. something physical, like gardening or sports coaching; something office-based or something out and about, like taking older or physically impaired people shopping.

Step 2:

There are lots of ways to find volunteering opportunities that are a good fit for you. You can look for chances to help out locally in places such as the local library, local papers, and community notice boards or on your council's website for opportunities in your area. Alternatively, you can check out volunteering websites that provide opportunities and information.



VITALITY WORKS

Sanitarium Workplace Health