

You Scratch My Back – I Scratch Yours

How volunteerism can benefit both your health and the life of others

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As we get older, it becomes harder to find the motivation to get up everyday. Instead, birthday parties for your nieces, nephews, and grandchildren become the only occasions in which you leave the house. However, this does not have to be the case.

Stephens, Breheny and Mansvelt’s 2015 research shows that volunteering can result in improved cognitive, physical, and psychosocial health. It can even halt mortality by several years. Now, I know these claims might sound crazy! But think about it – if you get out every morning and participate in service for a few hours, you’d be getting your exercise in while at the same time fulfilling your daily social intake.

Apart from the positive physical health effects, Stephens, Breheny and Mansvelt state that partaking in daily social activities – such as volunteering – can help one mentally. While one is able to visit their best friends all the time and gossip at young ages, this pastime tends to occur more rarely as one becomes older. Thus, just as physical activity is important in healthy aging, so is being able to just speak to someone when you feel lonely.

Such findings are backed up by Dury, et. al.’s study which surveyed elderly volunteers in comparison to elderly non-volunteers. They found that volunteers

 

had higher rates of both self-reported happiness and health.

While volunteering is mutually beneficial, it may be difficult for everyone who wants to volunteer, to actually volunteer. While service work seems relatively painless and accessible to everyone, not every site will be within walking distance of a person. Additionally, Dury et. al.’s study also revealed that volunteers tend to be wealthier than non-volunteers.

However, the benefits of volunteering extend far beyond income brackets! Because of this, there are services in place the help volunteers get to their site, and a few of them are listed below.

Feeling inspired by this information? Then go out and help someone – I promise that you would be helping yourself in return! Do not be discouraged to volunteer for lack of transportation or any reason for that matter!

Have a grandparent or friend who identifies as an aging adult? Be sure to extend this information to them! Aging can be lonely, but service work can help combat that.

Inspired to get out and volunteer? Check out the following sites!

<http://www.retiredbrains.com/senior-living-resources/volunteering>

<http://www.nationalservice.gov/programs/senior-corps>

Need Transportation to your site? No problem, we’ve got you covered:

<http://www.carepathways.com/transx.cfm>



