

TEXT 2

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Eric Cooper

Volunteering – the beneficial side effects

Transcript:

So one of the greatest things about working for a non-profit the last 25 years is the fact that I get to work with a lot of great volunteers. In fact, at the *Food Bank* we have a thousand volunteers that come through our doors each week. One of our volunteers is 84 years old. He likes to come and sort a few canned goods, and then he likes to tell jokes. Most of the jokes he shares are incredibly
5 inappropriate, but he asked me one day – he says, “What’s volunteering and wetting your pants have in common?” “Well?” I nervously shrugged, and he said, “Everybody sees you doing it, but only you get the warm feeling.” Not bad for 84, right? But the truth is there’s a whole lot more benefit to volunteering than just the warm feeling.

Last year 64 million Americans donated 8 billion hours of their time. That was valued at 175 billion
10 dollars in economic impact across America. Children are tutored, seniors are delivered meals, trees are planted, and pets are looked after. Recently here in our community, individuals were rescued from a hurricane, and comfort was given to families who suffered the tragedy in Southern Springs¹. Communities can be transformed and individuals impacted. But I’m here today to talk to you about the growing amount of research and data that suggest that those who give support through
15 volunteering experience greater health benefits than those who receive support from their volunteers, highlighting the fact that we truly do get back more than we give when we volunteer. So it’s specific to physical and mental health. Here are just a few findings. When seniors volunteered to mentor children, they improved their stamina², their memory, their flexibility³, they decreased their levels of depression. When 10th graders in Canada volunteered at an after-school program tutoring
20 children, the volunteers lost weight and improved their cholesterol profiles. Even when researchers isolated⁴ for things like gender, age, socioeconomics, and health, they consistently found that when people volunteer, they live longer. You know, researchers also saw that when people volunteer, they could receive health benefits that went way beyond what can be achieved through traditional medical care, which has made me believe that maybe one of the solutions to lowering our nation’s
25 healthcare cost is volunteering.

¹ *the tragedy in Southern Springs*: masseskyderi i en kirke i Texas 2017

² udholdenhed

³ smidighed

⁴ (her) korrigerede

30 So there's three things you're going to want to remember when it comes to getting the maximum amount of health benefits from volunteering: Making the connection, making it pure⁵ and then getting the right dose. So first making the connection: it's important to follow your heart. What are you passionate about? Where are you called⁶? Where does your faith take you? There are some great websites to help you connect with a local nonprofit or a great volunteer experience. [...]

35 People choose to volunteer over the phone or via the web. That's a great way to connect. Nonprofits need help with writing and graphic design. They also could use help with web-based tasks, so all of your volunteering can be done from home. You might need to go to a quick orientation or attend a few meetings, but you, too, can volunteer anywhere you'd like. What's important is that you heed⁷ the call to serve, and in some ancient scripture⁸ it suggests that when we're in the service of our fellow beings, we're actually only in the service of our God. So number two making it pure. [...]

40 You're gonna want to make sure it's totally voluntary. It has to be altruistic⁹. You can't volunteer because you feel obligated. It can never come from a place of guilt. I'm sure all of us have been voluntold¹⁰ to do something. When that happens, we lose the health benefits, but when our volunteerism is truly discretionary¹¹, when it comes from an unselfish place, that's when all of the health benefits come from lowering your cholesterol and blood pressure to decreasing your anxiety and depression. You have that opportunity to get the health benefit, you just have to choose to connect. The volunteering will save your life, and you just need to make it pure, but here's the tricky part. Now that you know that volunteering will make you live longer that can't be the reason why
45 you volunteer because you're going to lose the benefit, alright? I think Gandhi¹² said it best. He said, "The best way to find our life or ourselves is when we lose ourselves in the service of others." So the last thing: number three getting the right dose. So researchers knowing that volunteering increases your life wanted to know, if you volunteered more, "would that make you live longer?" And what they found... that there was a volunteer threshold or a minimum and maximum dose, you'll want to
50 volunteer between 100 and 200 hours a year or between two to four hours a week, and you can receive those maximum health benefits and live a longer life. So remember make the connection, make it pure and get the right dose.

55 One day when I was at the *Food Bank* standing in our lobby, a man came up to me. He wanted to shake my hand and say thank you. He explained that he had just gone through the most difficult year of his life. He and his wife had an eleven-year-old child, and his daughter was beautiful and amazing, but due to an illness they lost her. And in losing her, he said he lost everything, his marriage, his job, he lost hope. In that place of discouragement¹³, he said he had trouble getting up in the morning and just wished he had died too, but he saw an ad for the *Food Bank* and so he came in. He started to

⁵ (her) af et godt hjerte

⁶ *Where are you called*: Hvad er din livsopgave

⁷ følger

⁸ Biblen

⁹ menneskekærligt

¹⁰ presset

¹¹ (her) bygger på ens egen vurdering

¹² (1869-1948) indisk politiker og åndelig leder

¹³ modløshed

60 volunteer. While he volunteered, he saw what kind of an impact he could have. He started to find purpose. That purpose began to heal him.

Isn't it interesting for all of us when we're in our season of trial when we feel overwhelmed, alone and discouraged, when we feel like the weight of the world is on our shoulders and we're ready to give up, the quickest and easiest way to lighten our load is just to take the load of someone else on our shoulders? It's counterintuitive¹⁴. You'd think that adding more weight would crush you even faster, but it heals, it recalibrates¹⁵. Service has the power to cure. So don't be surprised next time when you go visit your doctor that he doesn't prescribe a healthy dose of volunteering along with good diet and exercise. Now is our time. All of us need to choose to get out there and volunteer. Our lives and the lives of those we serve depend on it.

(2018)

¹⁴ ulogisk

¹⁵ (her) nulstillert