

# 8 Long-Term Health Benefits of Volunteering

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The impact of volunteerism can be felt in communities of all shapes and sizes. No matter the size of the community, though, the impact of volunteerism is always huge.

Wherever it occurs, volunteering exists to help others. But volunteerism's best-kept secret is this: it's good for you, too. We did some digging to find out all the reasons why volunteering rocks.

## 1. Boosts self esteem

Volunteering helps build [a strong safety net](#) for when you're experiencing trying times. With those strong social ties, you're always surrounded by a community that's willing to help you out when times get tough. When you volunteer, you become a part of someone else's safety net, too. By helping others, you'll build a greater sense of trust and self esteem.

## 2. Expands your connections

The relationships you can create while volunteering are endless. You connect to others through volunteering, and if you do it regularly, you can maintain those valuable social networks into the future. You can make new friends and keep the old by engaging in a common activity like volunteering. With a larger social network, you'll have more resources at your fingertips, which leads to better physical, mental and emotional health.

### 3. Makes you feel good

If you've ever volunteered before, you've probably experienced this: volunteering makes you happy! [Researchers at the London School of Economics](#) found that people become happier by volunteering more. When you give your time to others, you attain a personal sense of accomplishment, which accounts for some of the positive effects that volunteering has on your mood.

[There's a threshold](#) to reaping the full benefits of volunteering, though. In order to soak up all the positive effects of community service, you need to set aside some time for it. Volunteers who commit at least one or two hours every week reap the fullest benefits from their service.

### 4. Contributes to a longer life

Volunteering does more than boost your mood—it also has [effects on your physical well-being](#). Volunteers encounter greater longevity and less frequency of heart disease. Volunteers may be at a lower risk for memory loss, too. The social interaction can significantly [reduce the progress of Alzheimer's](#) and other types of dementia. Happier and healthier life? Count me in.

### 5. Gives purpose

As people get older, they experience a higher risk for isolation. Volunteering combats that statistic by adding a sense of purpose to your life. The same goes for people with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other mental illnesses. No matter who you are, there are plenty of ways to give your life new meaning by helping others.

## 6. Combats stress

Volunteering goes beyond just being something fun to do; it decreases stress, too. Studies on the “[Happiness Effect](#)” of volunteering show that you become happier the more you volunteer. When you assist others, your body releases dopamine in the brain, which has a positive effect on how you feel. Volunteers also experience lower levels of depression.

## 7. Gives a good example

Volunteering as a family is a great way to teach important lessons to your children. Kids are always learning from the example you set for them, so make sure it's a good one! You can show the impact of volunteering through your actions. By giving back to the community, you can lay the foundation for service in the years to come.

Volunteering doesn't just have to inspire kids, either! You can share your experiences through programs like [Reward Volunteers](#), which lets you connect with other volunteers, find new opportunities and win prizes for your community service. Through sharing your service, you can inspire others. Bringing smiles to other volunteers will bring one to you, too.

## 8. Teaches new skills

Live a little! Volunteering gives you the opportunity to explore new skills and interests that you might not get to enjoy otherwise. You can broaden your horizons while helping others at the same time.

If you're looking to change things up a little, you can also try out a new job or role without having to commit to something long-term. Volunteering gives you the inside scoop on how some organizations operate, and it can hook you up with some helpful references if you're serious about making a job switch.

From improving your physical well-being to boosting your mindset, volunteering does a world of good. Most times, you can see the impact of giving your time right off the bat.

If you haven't gotten your start in volunteerism, there's no time like the present. Don't know where to begin? The Reward Volunteers Program can help with that. You can connect with others and find volunteer opportunities in your area, making your first step in to volunteering as easy as pie.

With all the health perks associated with volunteering, there's really no reason why you shouldn't give it a shot. By helping improve your community, you're also helping yourself. It's a win-win! Once you get in the swing of things, you'll be a happy and healthy volunteer in no time.

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