

Support Your Community and Volunteer

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With the many roles we all fill including employee, parent/grandparent, student, and spouse, who has time to volunteer? I would suggest that most organizations appreciate *any amount of time* a volunteer is able to contribute. Additionally, volunteering together as a family is a great opportunity to show children the importance of giving back to the community.

Surprising Benefits of Volunteering:

1. **It's good for you.** Experts report that when you focus on someone other than yourself, it interrupts tension-producing patterns.
2. **Increases self-confidence.** Volunteering can provide a healthy boost to your self-confidence, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. You are doing good for others and the community, which provides a natural sense of accomplishment. Your role as a volunteer can also give you a sense of pride and identity.
3. **Provides a sense of purpose.** Older adults, especially those who have retired or lost a spouse, can find new meaning and purpose in their lives by helping others. Whatever your age or life situation, volunteering can help take your mind off your own worries and keep you mentally stimulated.
4. **Combats depression.** A key risk factor for depression is social isolation. Volunteering keeps you in regular contact with others and helps you develop a solid support system, which in turn protects you against stress and depression when you're going through challenging times.
5. **Helps you stay physically healthy.** The physical activity involved in certain forms of volunteering—such as environmental projects in parks, nature reserves, or beaches—can be good for your health at any age, but it's especially beneficial in older adults. Studies have found that those who volunteer have a lower mortality rate than those who do not.



6. **Can teach you valuable job skills.** Many volunteer opportunities provide extensive training and can help you build upon skills you already have and use them to benefit the greater community. Volunteering also gives you the chance to raise awareness for your favorite cause while developing and improving your public speaking, communication, and marketing skills.
7. **Can bring fun and fulfillment to your life.** Volunteering is a fun and easy way to explore your interests and passions. Doing volunteer work you find meaningful and interesting can be relaxing and an energizing escape from your day-to-day routine of work, school, or family commitments.

Questions To Consider When Volunteering:

- Is there something specific you want to do?
- Do you want to make it better around where you live?
- Do you want to meet people who are different from you?
- Are you willing to try something new?
- Would you like to see a different way of life and new places?
- What skills can you bring to a volunteer opportunity?
- Would you like to work with adults, children, animals, or remotely from home?

Places to consider when volunteering:

- Church or school
- Libraries or senior centers
- Homeless shelters
- Local animal shelters, rescue organizations, or wildlife centers
- Historical restorations, national parks, and conservation organizations

Just remember, no matter how much time you have to volunteer, your time and efforts are always appreciated.