

Helping others makes you happy

It's commonly believed that when we feel down, we should do something good for ourselves. But research suggests the opposite: you should do something good for someone else.

Research shows that helping others may decrease depression. People who help others regularly may live longer, healthier lives. Studies have shown the following effects of helping others:

- Doing five acts of kindness a day can make you feel happier.
- Supporting others may lower stress levels in older people.
- Donating money to charity boosts a feel-good part of the brain.

Acts of kindness can make you feel connected to other people. It can also make you feel needed and generous. This may distract you from your own stress and worries. It can also make you feel that your life has more purpose and meaning.

Source: *Mental Health America*

SIMPLE WAYS TO HELP



There are a number of ways you can help others. Try one of these ideas.

Small acts of kindness (try to do more than one each day):

- Call a friend or neighbor who lives alone or could use some company.
- Let someone go in front of you in line.
- Hold the elevator open for someone.
- Smile at people you meet and ask how they're doing. The store cashier or receptionist at the doctor's office may appreciate your kindness.

Volunteer ideas:

- Outdoor work: parks and highways often need people to help clean up. Local garden clubs often need people to weed and plant.
- Offer to make fundraising calls for your favorite charity.
- Help with coaching a kids' sports team.
- Volunteer at your local hospital. Most have a variety of ways you can help.
- Libraries often use volunteers to help organize materials and help patrons.

To find local volunteer opportunities, visit www.volunteermatch.org or www.1-800-volunteer.org.