



If you help others, you'll be healthier

The benefits of volunteering or helping other people seem to pay off for the giver and not necessarily the receiver.

Providing tangible help to others protects your health and may lengthen your life, according to a 5-year study by researchers at 3 universities.

The lead researcher Dr. Michael J. Poulin, assistant professor of psychology at the University of Buffalo, says, "Giving assistance to others may offer health benefits to the giver by buffering the negative effects of stress." The study was published in the American Journal of Public Health.

Here's why giving works. The study subjects were people from Detroit. They told researchers they had experienced stressful events during

the past year such as serious illness, burglary, job loss, financial troubles, or death of a family member. They also reported the amount of time they had spent in the past year helping friends, neighbors or relatives who did not live with them. They did errands, shopping and housework. They also provided transportation, child care and other tasks.

The researchers concluded that helping others reduced the risk of illness and death by protecting the givers, even though they themselves had significant life stress. The social interaction was an important factor.