5 Surprising Ways Volunteering Transforms Your Health
Why You Should Volunteer at SRC

Think of the last time you volunteered for something. Perhaps you chaperoned your grandchild's field trip or helped organize a food drive for your local food shelter. You probably felt pretty good after doing these good deeds, and there's a scientific reason why: According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, a study of Americans over the age of 60 found that those who volunteered reported lower disability and higher levels of well-being than those who did not volunteer. That's because volunteering improves your whole health — mind and body. Here's how:

Volunteering improves your social well-being

Volunteering often involves socializing and building strong bonds with others — and can do wonders for your health. Whether you're helping clean up your local park with a group of 20 community members or spending time at your favorite animal shelter with a few friends, you're reaping the healthy benefits of working with others.

Volunteering helps you stay active

Getting out and planting flowers in your community garden or repainting your town's library are just a few ways you can volunteer *and* get in some exercise. These types of activities help you work different muscles and build strength. Plus, they're a fun alternative to your typical workout routine. Just be sure to check with your doctor before participating in a volunteer gig that involves a lot of physical activity.

Volunteering gives you purpose

Your community, non-profit organizations, charities, and the people they serve depend on volunteers to support their causes. That's why when you volunteer, you *matter* — and this sense of purpose can have a big impact on your health.

Volunteering boosts your mood

Volunteering is uplifting — you meet new people, learn new skills, and make a difference in someone's life. Surrounding yourself with these positive vibes helps you build confidence, develop a strong support system, and feel, well, *happier*. This can help combat symptoms of depression, and since your mental health is strongly connected to your physical health, your overall health can benefit from the mood-boosting power of giving back.

Volunteering keeps your mind sharp

Challenging your brain is a great way to keep it strong. And when you participate in mentally stimulating volunteer activities like tutoring or event planning, you're doing just that. These types of volunteer activities help improve the cognitive functions of your brain, like your working memory and information processing. So, if you're looking for new ways to stay sharp, try volunteering. Find a cause that matters to you, donate the time you can to it, and enjoy what you get from giving back.

Adapted, by Rachel Queti /Aetna 9/19

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