

- Volunteer work

Volunteering is good for your health

Sherbrooke Record · 17 Oct 2024 · 4

(MC) Volunteering makes an immeasurable difference in the lives of volunteers and those they help. Many people may be surprised to learn how positive volunteering can be for volunteers. Indeed, studies show that volunteering leads to better physical and mental health, among other benefits.



According to an article published by the American Heart Association and Jeffrey Burr, a professor of gerontology at the University of Massachusetts Boston, “compared to non-volunteers, volunteers have less depression, less anxiety, higher self-esteem, greater happiness, and a greater sense of meaning in life.” Burr and the AHA note the health benefits of volunteering occur among all ages, and a deep look at how volunteer efforts are good for personal health shows just how profound giving back can be.

- Reduces stress: The Mayo Clinic reports that volunteering reduces stress and increases positive, relaxed feelings by releasing dopamine. When volunteers spend time in service to others, they report feeling a sense of meaning and appreciation, both of which can have stress-reducing effects.
 - Lowers depression: Research has shown that volunteering leads to lower rates of depression and anxiety, particularly among people 65 and older.
 - Provides a sense of purpose: Americorps reports volunteering can provide a sense of purpose in older adults, which can help replace feelings of inadequacy due to loss of major role identities, such as wage earner or parent. This sense of purpose can improve life satisfaction and happiness.
 - Reduces blood pressure: According to researchers at Carnegie Mellon University, older adults who volunteered for at least 200 hours annually decrease their risk of high blood pressure by 40 percent. This also may lower risk of heart disease and stroke.
 - Eliminates feelings of isolation: Volunteers working together link people to others and their communities. This can help people overcome feelings of isolation, which may come from being new to a community or being a senior and having a smaller social circle.
 - Increases happiness: Those who volunteer regularly tend to be happier and more empathetic towards others. Volunteering also instills a sense of pride that can make people happier.
 - Keeps the mind active: Individuals who volunteer can improve their cognitive health. That’s because volunteering engages a person in new skills, requires them to solve problems and keeps them mentally stimulated through various activities.
 - Improves physical health: Some volunteer activities will involve physical tasks that can contribute to improved physical health because they constitute moderate exercise.
- Volunteering offers a number of benefits that can improve both physical and mental health for those donating their time to help others.