

# Be generous: It's a simple way to stay healthier

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## *Chicago Tribune:*

If there's a magic pill for happiness and longevity, we may have found it.

Countless studies have found that generosity, both volunteering and charitable donations, benefits young and old physically and psychologically.

The benefits of giving are significant, according to those studies: lower blood pressure, lower risk of dementia, less anxiety and depression, reduced cardiovascular risk, and overall greater happiness.

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Studies show that when people think about helping others, they activate a part of the brain called the mesolimbic pathway, which is responsible for feelings of gratification. Helping others doles out happiness chemicals, including dopamine, endorphins that block pain signals and oxytocin, known as the tranquillity hormone.

Even just the thought of giving money to a specific charity has this effect on the brain, research shows.

Intuition tells us that giving more to oneself is the best way to be happy. But that's not the case, according to Dan Ariely, professor of behavioral economics and psychology at Duke University.

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A 2012 study in the journal *Health Psychology* by Sara Konrath and a team at the University of Michigan found that older adult volunteers had a lower risk of dying in a four-year period than nonvolunteers, as long as they volunteered for altruistic versus self-oriented reasons.

Read the whole story: [Chicago Tribune](#)