

Why Do We Give? Not Why Or How You Think

November 28, 2011

NPR:

New findings in the science of charity reveals some counter-intuitive results. For instance, people will give more money to a single suffering person than to a population of suffering people, and also give more when some type of physical discomfort — for example, running a marathon — is involved.

GUY RAZ, HOST:

This time of year, pleas for donations are as plentiful as eggnog and door-buster sales. Americans give around \$300 billion a year to charity. And as NPR's Alix Spiegel reports, psychologists have started to look more closely at when and why we're motivated to give.

ALIX SPIEGEL, BYLINE: The science of charity took off in earnest in the late 1990s, but the series of papers that attempted to understand a puzzling psychological phenomena: When people give to charity, they'll give far more money to a single suffering person than to a population of suffering people, which charity researcher Chris Olivola, of the University of Warwick, says doesn't make a lot of sense.

Read the full story: [NPR](#)