

April 2024 Issue

Mental and Physical Benefits of Volunteering

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

- Mahatma Gandhi

April is [National Volunteer Month](#), an opportunity to celebrate those who volunteer and educate others on the benefits of volunteering. Giving back to your community and serving others provides immense emotional, mental, and physical rewards.

Dr. Martin Seligman, Director of the Penn Positive Psychology Center noted, "Doing a kindness produces the single most reliable increase in wellbeing of any exercise we tested." (1) Volunteering your time and talent can take many forms, from one-time opportunities to ongoing participation. Activities can range from working to improve your community to supporting cultural or arts organizations to helping individuals who experience various types of needs. Whatever activities they choose, volunteers often share that they receive more than they give, as they experience:



- A sense of purpose and fulfillment
- Increased social connection and less loneliness
- Opportunity to learn new skills and to stay mentally sharp by using existing talents
- Lower risk of developing depression or anxiety, especially for older adults
- Increased physical health and wellness
- Greater confidence and self-esteem
- Reduced stress
- Opportunities for families to spend time together in a meaningful way

Studies have shown that helping others provides a release of dopamine which is beneficial in relieving stress—improving heart health and overall wellness. The opportunity to meet new people and form friendships through volunteering also enhances our wellness, especially now when many people struggle with loneliness.

For volunteer ideas, check with local nonprofits, schools, faith communities, hospitals, and arts and cultural centers. You may also find opportunities to volunteer through projects sponsored by your workplace. These opportunities offer employees a chance to meet others in their organization and to leverage the skills and resources of their company to bring about good for their community.

Earth Day 2024: Planet vs. Plastics



This year, Earth Day is April 22 and the theme is [Planet vs. Plastics](#). Since the first Earth Day in 1970, there has been a growing awareness of the vital importance of safeguarding the environment to protect the health and safety of humans, wildlife, and plants. Plastics, including microplastics, show up in waterways and oceans where they interfere with marine life as well as human health. Chemicals used in the manufacture of plastics have also been shown to alter human and animal endocrine functions.

For this year's Earth Day, consider adopting one or more of these ideas to celebrate:

- Reduce your use of single-use plastics, such as grocery shopping bags, bottled water, and restaurant take-out containers.
- Bring cloth or reusable bag for grocery and other shopping trips.
- Use an insulated, reusable water bottle. Carry it with you everywhere so that you can easily keep sipping to get in at least 64 ounces of water a day.
- If you frequently bring home leftovers when you dine at a restaurant, bring along your reusable container to use.
- Consider joining an Earth Day Clean Up Day project in your local community. Many focus on cleaning up trash near waterways, to prevent plastics from entering streams and rivers.
- Pick up trash in your neighborhood. Plastics that wash into storm sewers not only contribute to sewer backups in homes but also let microplastics find their way into streams and even municipal water systems.
- Get outdoors and enjoy a great walk in nature.

For more information, check out:

1. [Benefits of Volunteering - Project Helping](#)
2. [Earth Day 2024 - Earth Day](#)