

Psychological Benefits of Volunteerism

Definition & Scope

- Volunteerism is infused with values such as solidarity, reciprocity, mutual trust, belonging and empowerment, all of which contribute significantly to quality of life
- More than 1 billion people volunteer globally (United Nations, 2015)

Motives for Volunteering

- Values: satisfy personal values or humanitarian concerns, might have a religious component
- Community concern: to help a particular community, such as a neighborhood or ethnic group, to which you feel attached
- Esteem enhancement: to feel better about yourself or escape other pressures
- Understanding: to gain a better understanding of other people, cultures, or places
- Personal development: to challenge yourself, meet new people and make new friends, or further your career

Benefits of Volunteering

- Volunteerism makes a specific contribution by generating well-being for people and their communities
- Cultivates an outlook that contributes to a social environment that nurtures the well-being of all
- Volunteers with altruistic motives or a desire for social connection live longer, compared to those who didn't volunteer or had more selfish motives for volunteering
- Reduce risk of depression and stress levels
- Stay physically and mentally active

More Information

American Psychological Association – www.apa.org

UN Volunteers – www.unv.org

Psychologists' Association of Alberta – psychologistsassociation.ab.ca

Contact: local organizations, such as churches, community centers, YMCA/YWCA, Salvation Army etc; volunteer organizations, such as GlobeAware & Earthwatch, to plan a volunteer vacation; organizations based on your personal interests such as homelessness, human trafficking, mental health, child welfare, education, physical health, poverty etc

Sources

UN Volunteers (2015). The power of volunteerism. Online

Konrath, Sara (2011). Volunteering to help others could lead to better health. Online via APA.

Corporation for National & Community Service (2007). The Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research