

To help yourself, start by helping others

“If you want happiness for an hour, take a nap. If you want happiness for a day, go fishing. If you want happiness for a year, inherit a fortune. If you want happiness for a lifetime, help somebody.”

Chinese Proverb

Helping others is beneficial not only for those who receive help but for those who give it. Teaching kids to volunteer helps them develop self esteem, empathy, social skills, resiliency and gratitude just to name a few. These important skills also set them up for success in other areas of their lives. Self-esteem grows when kids get to see that what they do matters to others. Much of the scientific research on resilience — which is our ability to bounce back from adversity — has shown that having a sense of purpose, and giving support to others, has a significant impact on our well-being.

There is a lot of evidence that one of the best anti-anxiety and depression treatments is generosity.

Young children have an innate desire to help people. They will share their treats and share their hugs readily. They are always happy to help when asked. If only we could all have the same love of service and acts of kindness as little children. Think of the positive impact we would make on the world!

Science proves that when we help others we feel happy. There appears to be a direct correlation with overall well-being and giving to others. Helping others shifts the focus away from yourself and negative thoughts and feelings you may have. It gives your brain a chance to reset, self regulate and become full of the “feel goods” instead of the “feel bads”.

As you have read, taking the time to volunteer with your kids is important for a variety of reasons, and it does not have to be a chore. Let your children take an active role in the process by identifying causes or charities that interest them and deciding as a family what to do. This will give them a sense of purpose and help them become more connected to the volunteering experience. Kids can help out at home, do a service project at school, or do a favor for a sibling.

Here are two resources with ideas to get you started:

<https://www.wildapricot.com/blog/volunteer-from-home#7-virtual-volunteer-opportunities>

<https://www.signupgenius.com/nonprofit/kid-friendly-volunteering.cfm>