

7 Generosity Habits

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The 7 Habits

You've read all the self-help books about about being healthier and happier and more productive. So have I. You underline them. Fold the corners of the best pages. So do I. But not much changes.

The secret to bridging the gap from where you are and where you want to be is to transform your knowledge into habit. Fundamentally, being healthy in your body, mind, and spirit boils down to being generous to yourself and others by incorporating 7 habits into your daily life.





The 7 Fundamental Habits:

1. Physical Health
2. Mindfulness
3. Connect With Others
4. Connect With Yourself
5. Gratitude
6. Simplicity
7. Philanthropy

If you take care of your physical health, practice mindfulness, connect with others and yourself, express gratitude, practice simplicity, and give time and money to causes you care about, your life will naturally unfold as a generous life that is good for you and good for others.

Many of these habits are about you taking care of you. That's because you are the foundation from which you give to others, so that foundation needs to be strong and solid. You must be generous with yourself and give yourself those things that are good for you and enhance your well-being. You must give

to yourself freely, because you are worth taking care of. And you must be generous with yourself frequently.

Being generous with yourself means eating and exercising regularly, finding time for meditation and/or prayer regularly, and taking other actions that nurture and improve your physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

While taking care of yourself is critical, so is taking care of others. One of your deepest human needs is to make a contribution. At the end of your life, you're going to look back and ask, "Did my life matter?" And you can answer that question with a resounding "Yes!" when you make a positive impact on the world and improve the lives of others.

But in order to do that, you must be generous with others and help improve their physical, emotional, and spiritual conditions. You must be generous with the world and work to solve problems at their roots so that fewer people suffer in the future.

In the book, you'll discover why each habit is important, and tips based on the latest scientific research for making these habits a daily part of your life. But first....

A Confession!

I learned about giving from my mom. Her first instinct in any situation was to ask, “How can I help?” And for her, it wasn’t just a rhetorical question. If you were carrying a big box, she’d drop everything to help you. If your car was stuck, she was out there helping you push it. If your kid needed to learn how to drive a stick shift, she was at your door next weekend picking up your daughter and heading over to a vacant parking lot. My mother loved giving, and people loved her for it.

Even though I grew up with this great example, I didn’t really live up to it and it took me a long time to admit it to myself. Until one day, a man I hardly knew helped me realize that I wasn’t giving as much as I could and not nearly as much I wanted to.





A Little Background

I had a degree in English Literature, but, I ended up in New York City working for the technical support department at an accounting firm. Now, I didn't know anything about computers, but I figured out enough to do my job. And I loved living in NYC. It was fabulous.

Until, September 11th happened. That morning, I was on the subway on my way to work and traveling directly under the World Trade Center when the first airplane hit. By the time I got into the office, my co-workers were glued to the t.v. where we watched the towers fall. I thought about all those people who did what I did that morning— got up, got ready, went to work. Only they weren't coming home. Without any warning, their lives were over, as mine could have been if I'd been running late for work. I decided I'd better start doing something important so that I wouldn't regret all the things I hadn't done if I died unexpectedly.

I considered a number of things, and when they didn't quite work out I ended up working with my mom in the mortgage business. It wasn't long before I forgot my lesson from September 11th.

Doh! Have you had to learn a lesson more than once?

So I'm in this incredibly high pressure job that I don't like. Day in and day out. 60 hours or more a week. It's no wonder I started having panic attacks. I'd wake up, and I couldn't catch my breath, my heart was racing, and I'd put my hand on the bedroom wall behind me to reassure myself that the world was still real. I lived with that for about a year before I heard myself say, "If I have to do this for the rest of my life, I'd rather kill myself." Fortunately, I heard what I said, warning bells started going off in my head, and I realized I needed to make a change.

So, I shut down my practice, without knowing what I was going to do next. I had been working so hard for so long I didn't even know who I was anymore, and I certainly didn't know what I should do next. So, I spent the next two years "discovering" myself. I went on spiritual retreats and meditation retreats. I read, I listened, and I traveled. And I still didn't know.

I got this idea that spending a month alone looking out over the stormy ocean would be just the ticket, so I rented a house in Newport, Oregon for the entire month of November. While I was there, I would walk my dogs past the corner convenience store and chat with the older man who was living



there as a care taker. The store was closed, because there weren't enough tourists in November to justify keeping it open, and he was always alone. We'd chat for a few minutes before I continued on my way, and I learned a little about him and his story. I learned that he was a recovering drug addict whose family no longer spoke to him. I learned that he spent most of his evening watching t.v.

And I knew he would be alone for Thanksgiving.

Nervously, I invited him to spend Thanksgiving dinner with me at a Chinese restaurant. Honestly, I hoped he'd say no, because I wanted to feel good for asking but I didn't actually want to do it. You know what I mean?

But he said yes, so I picked him up, and we drove into town where we shared plates of sesame chicken and beef with broccoli while he talked about his kids. When I looked across the table, I didn't see a stranger. I saw a father who was proud of his kids. I saw a man who regretted his past. I saw a human being who rarely had an opportunity to talk with someone who cared about him and what was important to him.

That was the moment I became committed to giving, because I realized that taking him out to dinner was such a little thing

for me. But it was a big deal for him. I finally got it. It was true that it is the simple, every day gifts that change the world.

Don't get me wrong. Up to this point, I was a good person. I was honest, hardworking, and kind. But I wasn't giving very much.

Why??

I had to ask myself a few tough questions. I think for the same reasons many of us don't. I was so busy that sometimes I didn't have time to even notice an opportunity to give let alone actually do something about it. Sometimes I was afraid I'd do it wrong or be taken advantage of or look stupid. Sometimes, I told myself I'd do it later when I had plenty of time and money. Have you ever said any of those things?

That was about to change. I was going to discover how to make giving easy and doable. It was going to be part of my daily life, because I was ready to be the person I wanted to be and have the impact on the world I wanted to have. I was tired of being afraid. I was sick of waiting for a perfect someday that was never going to arrive.

I wanted to live generously.

Why Generosity?

Generosity is the secret to being healthy, in body, mind, and spirit.





Healthy In Body

When you are generous to your body, you nourish your body with physical activity, good foods, water, and sleep.

Healthy in Mind

When you are generous to your mind, you care for your mental and emotional health in ways that reduce your stress, increase your sense of calm, and embrace yourself and your glorious imperfections.

Healthy in Spirit

When you are generous to your spirit, you connect with yourself and others in meaningful ways.

A Generous Life

One in which you make a habit of taking care of yourself while taking care of others so that you reach your full potential and make the world a better place.

Habit 1: Physical Health

There is deep wisdom within our very flesh, if we can only come to our senses and feel it.

Elizabeth A. Behnke





Be Generous To Your Body

You are the foundation from which you give, and that foundation needs to be solid or giving in the other circles will be exhausting and unfulfilling. When you have good physical health you have more mental, emotional, and physical capacity to be generous with others.

Even if that wasn't true, physical health is still fundamental, because it is an act of generosity to yourself. When you love yourself, you take care of your physical health.

Good physical health is: Being physically active every single day, eating foods that are good for you, sleeping well, and drinking enough water.

Good physical health is NOT: Being skinny. You are not your weight. How much you weigh measures one thing: the amount of gravity exerted on your body. That's it. It doesn't tell you if you're healthy. It doesn't tell if you are a good per-

son or a bad person. It doesn't tell you how much willpower you have.

It's time to develop a positive body image that lets you accept where you're at physically and the improvements you need to make while at the same time enjoying your body just as it is! You can have good self-esteem regardless of your physical body.

Let's face it, if negative thoughts about our bodies actually caused us to lose weight, we'd all be skinny! A Glamour survey of more than 300 women of all sizes found that women have, on average, 13 negative body thoughts a day with 97 percent having at least one "I hate my body" thought each day.

Remarkably, it's easier to lose weight when you have good self-esteem and acceptance of your body, because you are more likely to take actions that are good for your physical health.



But if you don't lose weight, you don't. There are worse things than being fat— like being mean, petty, or spiteful. Besides, your weight is not just affected by food and exercise but also genetic, biological, and digestive behaviors you have little to no control over.

You focus on what you can control: being physically active, choosing appropriate amounts of good food, drinking plenty of water, and getting a good night's sleep.

Try This...

For the next week, practice for two minutes each day this self-acceptance exercise designed by Nathaniel Branden in *The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem*.

Stand in front of a full-length mirror, looking at yourself, all the parts you like and don't like, and say, "Whatever my defects and imperfections, I accept myself unreservedly and completely. Right now, that's me. I don't deny the fact. I accept it."

If you experience severe resistance to accepting yourself, start with "I refuse to accept my body and I refuse to accept my refusal."

Habit 2: Mindfulness

All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone.

Blaise Pascal





Mindfulness

Moving your body, doing your job, loving your family, playing a game, preparing a meal, everything that you do requires your mind to engage, plan, direct.

A calm, focused, and strong mind improves nearly every aspect of your life, so taking care of your mind is truly an act of generosity towards yourself, and that's why Mindfulness is the 2nd fundamental habit to Living Generously.

Scientific studies show that mindfulness boosts your immune system, increases positive emotions, decreases depression and anxiety, grows additional gray matter inside your brain, improves your ability to focus and complete tasks, fosters compassion and altruism making people more likely to help others, and enhances relationships and feelings of intimacy.

You can think of mindfulness as exercise for the brain. Unlike exercising the body which requires exertion, exercising the mind requires stillness.

Meditation is one mindfulness tool that is fundamental to taking care of your mind. I love how Andy Puddicombe, a former Buddhist monk, describes meditation. He says that meditation is “about stepping back, seeing the thought clearly — witnessing it coming and going — without judgment, but with a relaxed, focus mind.”

While there are many different types of meditation, if you're not already meditating on a regular basis, keep it nice and simple. Try a simple breathing meditation for just a minute or two a day. In a simple breathing meditation, all you have to do is sit still and observe your breath as it goes in and out of your lungs, without changing your breathing. Don't push or force your breathing, or try to make it deeper. Simply observe your breath. If other thoughts creep into your mind, and they



will, simply acknowledge the thought, then resume your focus on your breathing.

As you begin your practice, start small. One or two minutes a day, and when you're doing that regularly, go up to five minutes. When you've got 5 minutes down, add 5 more minutes. The focus is creating the meditation habit and to create the meditation habit you just have to meditate every day. Did you get your butt on the meditation cushion today? Then you've succeeded. It's that simple. You can meditate for as long as you'd like, but I think 20 minutes is probably sufficient for those with busy schedules.

Forget about getting results from meditation or doing meditation right. Meditation is not about achieving a state of mind or emotion. It's a practice. In fact, you are practicing three important skills when you meditate. First, you are practicing allowing. Whatever you're feeling and thinking is ok. You're not judging it. You're not hiding it or forcing it down so you don't feel it. Whatever is, is. Second, and just as importantly, you

are practicing staying. You are no longer blown about on the stormy winds of your emotions. Instead, you can stand in the eye of the storm and witness them. You can feel them and yet not have to do anything about them. Third, you are experiencing the impermanence of your thoughts, emotions, and physical body. Your emotions, your aches and pains, your heart aches, your fears, even your own body are temporary and in constant flux. By observing your emotional and physical state, you realize this truth and it gives you the wisdom to experience pain without suffering.

Allowing, staying, and experiencing impermanence creates mental and emotional space in your life to feel whole, to feel others, and to show up even when life is tough, scary, or heartbreaking.

Meditation is just one of the tools that helps you practice allowing, staying, and experiencing impermanence, but mindfulness can be experienced and strengthened at any moment throughout the day.



Let's take for example, the experience of being hungry. Your mind, if left to its own devices, may or may not even notice there are sensations in the stomach. Your mind might just notice that according to the clock, it's lunch time which might start it thinking about what you had for lunch yesterday and what you'll be having for dinner tonight, then it's moved on to what you need to do this afternoon. So you hustle off grab something to eat, because you really need to be back at your desk in 10 minutes.

On the other hand, being hungry is an opportunity to practice mindfulness. Instead of eating just because it's lunch time. You notice that your brain is telling you it's time to eat lunch. You notice sensations that you're feeling in your stomach, and think, "Yes, I may be hungry". Then you reflect on the thoughts and emotions those sensations in your stomach have triggered in your brain. Being hungry isn't good or bad. It just is. Finally, you choose to eat when it is the right time and the foods that will take care of your body.

Mindfulness is simple, really. It's just noticing each thought, feeling, body sensation, and surrounding environment in the moment as you're experiencing it without judging it as good or bad. Every moment and experience give you an opportunity to practice mindfulness and improve the quality of your mind.

Mindfulness is a habit that will help you become the person you want to be and have the impact on the world you want to have.

Try this:

For one minute each morning this week, close your eyes and practice 1 minute of a simple breathing meditation. You can meditate for longer if you'd like, but just make sure you do at least one minute.

Habit 3: Connect With Others

If you could only sense how important you are to the lives of those you meet; how important you can be to the people you may never even dream of. There is something of yourself that you leave at every meeting with another person.

Mr. Rogers





Connect With Others

There's only one way to make the world a better place: you have to make an impact on others.

The hermit isolated in a mountain retreat doesn't make the world a better place. But if he wrote some inspirational works that were later released that inspired people to live better lives, at that point he made the world a better place. It's not until others are involved, that an impact is made.

But you're probably not a hermit, which means I've got good news for you. It's impossible not to have an impact on the world. The question isn't "Will you have an impact?"

The question is, "What kind of impact will you have and how big will it be?"

GOOD FOR YOU AND GOOD FOR OTHERS

Make no mistake. While Connecting with Others is good for them, it's also good for you. Social isolation is a better indicator for mortality than being overweight, smoking, or having high blood pressure. Additionally, people who lack a strong sense of connection to others also are more vulnerable to anxiety, depression, antisocial behavior, and even suicidal behaviors, and in a negative feedback loop, those behaviors tend to reinforce and increase their isolation from others.

The opposite of being socially isolated is being socially connected, and the effects of social connection are opposite of the effects of social isolation. Where social isolation is associated with a higher mortality rate, strong social connection is associated with a 50% increased chance of longevity. Instead of being vulnerable to mood disorders, people who report feeling strong connections with others also report lower rates of anxiety and depression. Instead, they have higher self-esteem, are more empathic to others, more trusting and cooperative,



and in a positive feedback loop, those behaviors reinforce their connections with others.

WHAT EXACTLY IS CONNECTION?

So, you want to be connected with others, but what is it and how do you do it? Brene Brown, a Professor at the University of Houston Graduate College of Social Work who gave one of the most popular TED talks of all time on “The Power of Vulnerability”, provides a lovely and useful definition of connection. She writes that connection is

“the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship.”

Connection is a two way street. In order for you to feel connected, you must feel seen, heard, and valued. In order for someone to feel connected to you, you must see them, hear

them, value them. Clearly, this type of connection doesn't happen after one or two interactions. It takes time and repeated positive experiences, which is why it's important to making Connecting With Others a habit by taking small actions every day that help connect you with other people.

Relax!

If you're a co-dependent or an introvert, you may be worried right now. But I promise you that it is possible to give to others in a way that is healthy and in a way that you will enjoy.

BOUNDARIES FOR THE CO-DEPENDENTS

As we begin a life of living generously, it's important to take a moment to talk about boundaries, because sometimes you can be too generous or generous in the wrong ways or to the wrong people. As a result, you can be taken advantage of or get involved in situations that are unhealthy. You may even be doing these things now. If you feel like you have to “save”



people, if you get sucked into drama, if you swing between loving and hating your friends or lovers, then you probably already have boundaries issues.

Poor boundaries result from misunderstanding who is responsible for what. The other person is responsible for their actions, their emotions, their responses to their situation, their happiness or lack there of. And if you feel responsible for those things, you end up doing things for people that not only they should do for themselves but things that only they can do for themselves. While you can provide guidance, inspiration, and some tools, you are not respecting them when you disregard their personal responsibility. And very likely, you are not even doing these things for them. It's about you. It's YOUR need to be loved or admired driving your so called generous actions.

Boundaries work both ways. You are responsible for your actions, your emotions, your responses to your situation, and your happiness or lack there of. When you expect other peo-

ple to do certain things for you, to act towards you in certain ways, or to make you feel loved or happy, you place control of your life in someone else's hands. You need them, and your neediness gives them power over your life. Unfortunately, they can't fix you any more than you can fix them.

Fundamentally, healthy boundaries are a result of healthy self-esteem. When you respect yourself, you take care of your physical, emotional, spiritual health. You don't surrender responsibility for your well-being. You don't look outside yourself for only things you can give yourself. And you want other people to have self-respect, so you give them the courtesy of taking responsibility for their lives, too.

STRATEGIES FOR THE INTROVERTS

I'm an introvert. Sometimes I think that if I never left my house again, I'd be ok with that, because my house is the most beautiful and comfortable place in the world to me. I love being home. I love reading. I love being thoughtful, ex-



ploring all the details of a topic and improving myself. I love hanging out with a few people that I know really well. But I don't always enjoy sharing my emotions with others and I tend to be more reserved around large groups of people.

Can you relate? If so, you might be an introvert like me, and the focus on giving to others might make you a little nervous. As someone who used to be painfully shy, I understand, and I assure you that even as an introvert, connecting with others is not only possible, it's necessary.

You just have to discover HOW to connect in a way that fits your personality.

Shyness and introversion are often confused, but they are completely different. Shyness is about fear. It's feeling tense or uncomfortable in social situations because it's not safe to be yourself or express your opinion. But introversion and extroversion are personality traits. Introverts are more inter-

nally directed while extroverts are externally directed. Both introverts and extroverts can suffer from shyness.

Here are a few strategies you can use to turn your introversion into a powerful tool for social connection.

1. **Take alone time.** As an introvert, you will always need to recharge, so take the alone time you need to calm, center, and energize yourself. The small act of focusing on your breath while walking into an event (i.e. a walking meditation) might make a huge difference for you.
2. **Prepare.** As an introvert, you feel more confident when you are prepared, so embrace it. Prepare a few ice breakers, find out a little about the other attendees, learn a little about the history of the event or topic, write out your argument for a new strategy at work before presenting it at the office meeting.



3. **Visualize success.** Before a social event, stand in a confident posture and repeat a mantra like, “You’re good enough, smart enough, and gosh darn’t, people like you”.
4. **Listen closely and ask questions.** This is what you do best, and this is wonderful, because you know what people LOVE to do? Talk about themselves! Brilliant. Easy.
5. **Focus.** As introverts, we can get overwhelmed, so focus on a few areas where you want to be social. An extrovert may love being involved in 10 different charities, but maybe you want to choose 1 or 2 that you care a lot about. Or focus on 1 or 2 different social events like the Chamber of Commerce’s Business After Hours and your industry’s professional organization. Then give yourself permission to say no to the 100 other networking opportunities available to you.
6. **Get comfortable with being uncomfortable.** It’s ok to be scared and awkward. It’s ok to try something new and not

be very good at it. Show up anyway. The more comfortable you are with being uncomfortable, the more comfortable you’ll become.

All right, so that’s the third habit. And there is only one way to make it a habit, you gotta do it.

Try this...

1. Who in your life would you like to strengthen your connection with?
2. What is already good about your relationship with that person? In what ways do they draw sustenance strength from you?
3. What would you like to improve?
4. What action will you take to communicate to this person that they are seen, heard, and valued?

Habit 4: Connect With Yourself

To love oneself is the beginning of a life-long romance.

Oscar Wilde





Connect With Yourself

Who you are is beautiful. What you want is important. What you can accomplish is astounding. But sometimes the hardest part is knowing who you are and what you really want. Sometimes your fear about being judged, rejected, laughed at, different persuades you to hide parts of who you are, to appear to be tougher than you really are, to not care about things you care about, to deny parts of your personality.

Connecting with Yourself is about knowing and honoring ALL of who you are- your good, your bad, your ugly, in your sweat pants, in your sexiest heels. All of who you are.

When you are generous with yourself, you...

Give yourself a break: Have you noticed that you are your own worst critic? I know it's true for me. But would you be as hard on your children or your best friend as you are on yourself? Treat yourself like you treat your best treasures.

Give yourself credit: Sure, you're not perfect. But you're not supposed to be! You're a work in progress, so give yourself a little pat on the back for the good stuff you're already doing and the progress you've already made.

Give yourself permission: Take chances and risks. Be wrong. Be silly. Be vulnerable. Try something new. Play. Laugh. Cry. Give yourself permission to act like a kid, to act like a grownup, to act like an entrepreneur or an artist or anything else that catches your fancy. Give yourself permission to be all of who you are.

Give yourself time: Giving to others requires a strong foundation from which to give. Give yourself time to do things that restore your spiritual and physical health.

Give yourself the gift of receiving: In the same way other people need you, you need other people. In the same way, you feel great when you give to others, others feel great



when they give to you. Give others the gift of giving to you, and give yourself the gift of receiving from others.

Connecting with yourself is a fundamental habit, because if you don't accept you, and I mean all of you: the good, the bad, the ugly, the beautiful; if you can't let all of your light shine, because you are afraid of being judged; if you can't love all of yourself, giving to other will be exhausting and unfulfilling.

Try This...

For a small boost to your self-esteem, try this exercise:

1. On a scale from 1 to 10, one feeling absolutely worthless and 10 being totally confident that you are awesome, how much self-esteem do you have?
2. List 5 things you're good at.
3. List 5 things aspects of your personality that you like.
4. List 5 things you've accomplished in the past.

The 5th Habit: Gratitude

I would maintain that thanks are the highest form of thought; and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder.

G.K. Chesterton





Gratitude

Gratitude is a keystone habit whose good effects cascade through your life improving nearly every area: physical, emotional, spiritual, work, and personal relationships. You name it, gratitude helps.

University of California, Berkley, has documented and measured the impact of gratitude on people's lives in hundreds of studies. They conclude that gratitude is one of the most reliable methods for increasing happiness and life satisfaction; it boosts feelings of optimism, joy, pleasure, enthusiasm. It reduces anxiety and depression, strengthens the immune system, lowers blood pressure, reduces symptoms of illness, and makes us less bothered by aches and pains. It encourages us to exercise more and take better care of our health. Grateful people get more hours of sleep each night, spend less time awake before falling asleep, and feel more refreshed upon

awakening. Gratitude makes people more resilient and helps people recover from traumatic events, and PTSD.

Gratitude is a simple affirmation of goodness that acknowledges that the goodness comes from some place outside yourself. A simple "Thank You" is a grateful act but you can also become a grateful person who habitually looks at the world as a source of goodness.

There are countless things to be grateful for and dozens of ways to feel and express that gratitude.

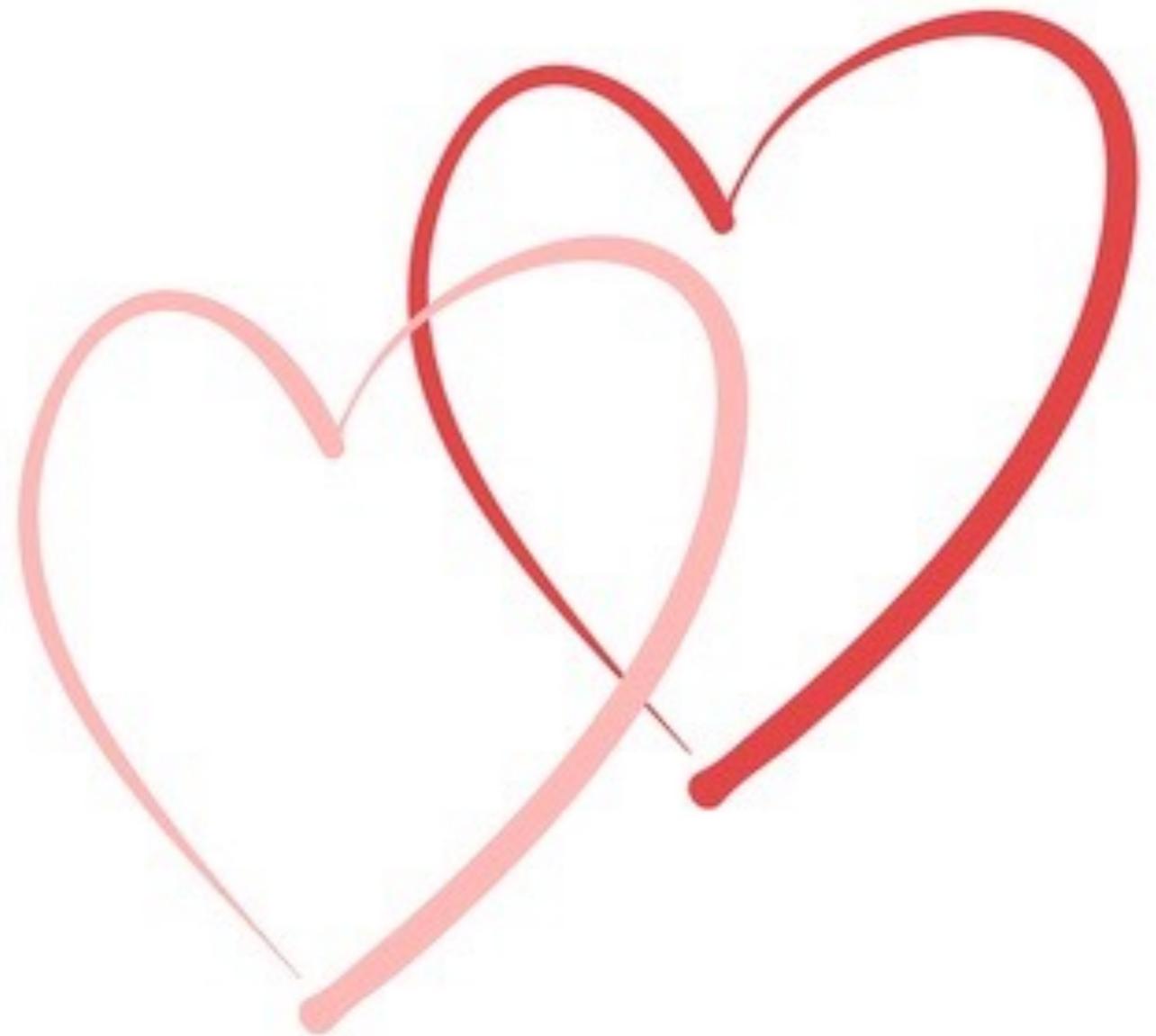
Try This...

1. List 5 things you are grateful for
2. Choose of one of those items, and describe why you are grateful for that person or thing. What does it bring to your life? What would it mean if it was suddenly gone?

The 6th Habit: Simplicity

The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak.

Hans Hofman





Simplicity

Simplicity is one of the essential 7 habits, because simplicity makes room for what is important in your life. When your mind, your schedule, and your home are filled with clutter, spending time on what's most important to you is much more difficult to do because it is harder to see.

Simplicity of Mind: A calm, balanced mind provides clarity of thought that will help you be more productive and effective in every area of your life. Simplicity of mind is not only addressed in the Mindfulness exercises but also in activities that take you outside the complicated man made world and into the simple, uncomplicated existence of the natural world.

Simplicity of Schedule: At the end of your life, you'll wish you spent more time with friends and family and on treasured projects, so discover opportunities to focus on the activities that are most important to you and let go of what is no longer serving you. Work, whether it's in the home or outside the home, has a way of dominating your life, simplifying what you do and how you do it can go a long way to integrating work with a balanced, simple, fulfilling life.

Simplicity of Home: Stuff has a way of accumulating, and as it takes up space in your home, it also takes up time and emotional energy to care for it and to live around it. Simplicity at home provides more physical space for family and friends to live in and frees up time and energy.

Try This...

1. On a scale from 1 to 10, 1 being not at all and 10 being utterly, how overwhelmed are you?
2. On a scale from 1 to 10, 1 being not at all and 10 being insanely, how busy are you?
3. On a scale from 1 to 10, 1 being not at all and 10 being like a souvenir shop, how cluttered is your home?
4. For the next week, place a 24 hour waiting period before buying anything that aren't essential food items. When you want to buy something, notice what it is. Ask yourself, where the impulse to buy it came from. Then tomorrow, ask yourself, what need will this purchase meet? Is it worth the money and space and emotional energy?

The 7th Habit: Philanthropy

What we think or what we know or what we believe is, in the end, of little consequence. The only consequence is what we do.

John Ruskin





Philanthropy

What do you think of when you hear the word philanthropist? Do you think of a group of women who can trace their ancestry back to the Mayflower and get together at sophisticated luncheons to donate thousands of dollars to children's hospitals or art museums? Maybe you think of Bill Gates and Warren Buffet's Giving Pledge, the effort that's trying to persuade billionaires to donate half of their wealth?

However, it is not the amount of money you give away that matters. A philanthropist is someone who

- Has a picture of how the world should be.
- Donates with the intention of bringing that picture to life.
- Takes the necessary steps to evaluate if a particular donation will foster that vision.

You can donate \$25 and be a philanthropist, because you took that donation seriously and made an effort to make sure it went to accomplish your goal. And someone could donate \$1 million and not be a philanthropist, because that money meant nothing to them and they didn't care what happened to that donation after they made it. Philanthropy has everything to do with HOW you donate and nothing to do with how much you donate.

In other words, philanthropy is a state of mind, an outlook on the world, and a way of living.

Philanthropy is where the rubber meets the road. It's where the tongue in your mouth lines up with the tongue in your shoe. If you want to make the world a better place, then you have to DO SOMETHING about it. Philanthropy is you doing something about what you believe so that the world will be a better place



Time or Money?

Is it better to donate money or to volunteer? Some say money is more important and some say time. I say, they're both right.

TIME

When you volunteer, you open yourself up to new experiences that can grow your skills, expand your awareness, and discover new interests. It gives you the opportunity to connect with people and that can change your life and their life in ways you can't anticipate. Walking dogs at your local animal rescue or serving meals at a homeless are magnificent contributions to your community.

But formal volunteering is not the only way you can give your time. When you mentor a friend's son who's graduating from college and looking to get into your field, you give your

time. When you write your church's newsletter or coach your child's baseball team, you give your time.

Personally, I give my time at Toastmasters. There are thousands of Toastmaster clubs around the world filled with people practicing their public speaking. But I don't just practice my public speaking. I serve as my club's president and as the leader for all the clubs in my area. I help new members get comfortable speaking and clubs become more successful in recruiting members. I don't have to do it. It takes up a lot of my time. But I love it, and I love helping people overcome their fear of public speaking.

MONEY

Imagine that your neighbor knocks on your door and asks you to help him move next weekend. You might eagerly give him your time or you might groan and do it anyway, or you might say, sorry I don't have the time to help you. But the im-



portant part here, is notice how you feel when you imagine him asking for your time.

Now imagine that same neighbor knocks on your door. This time, he asks to borrow \$50 to help make end meets until the next payday comes. How does that feel different. If your like me, I get a little tight in the chest. Ooh, money? You want money from me?

Money is strange, and it does strange things to us. We spend so much of our lives in pursuit of it, collecting it, thinking about it, using it.

How much money we make can comfort us, motivate us, or terrify us. Will there be enough today? this month? in retirement?

Money defines us. Are we poor? in the middle class? rich?

We're afraid our money will get lost or stolen. We want to keep our money, and we're afraid someone will take advantage of us and use our money inappropriately.

Oh, the ways money influences our lives, thoughts, and choices, and there is only one way to lessen the power money holds over us, and that is to give it away.

Giving it away, helps you acknowledge that money doesn't belong to you. You are going to die. And you can't take it with you. So, really, you are the temporary steward of money, and your job is to care for it and use it while you have it.

It helps you recognize that money is a tool used to provide for and support the things you love.

It helps you realize that money doesn't define who you are. Your actions define who you are and how you use your money is an action that defines you.



Is it better to give money or time? Both are equally important. If you happen to find yourself with more money than time, than give more money than time. If you have more time than money, then give more time. But always try to give a little of each.

Try this...

1. Brainstorm three causes you feel passionate about. Choose causes that you care deeply about and if your actions helped fix these problems, you'd feel like your life mattered.
2. If only one of these could be fixed in your life time, which one would you pick? Do you give time and money to support this cause? If not, why not? What can you do right now to further this cause?
3. Check out **Change Gangs: Virtual Giving Circles** (www.changegangs.com) where we make philanthropy an easy, fun, and effective habit.

Summary

If you take care of your physical health, practice mindfulness, connect with others and yourself, express gratitude, practice simplicity, and give time and money to causes you care about, your life will naturally unfold as a generous life. You can stop trying to be the person you want to be, because you are it. You don't have to worry if the world is a better place because you were here, because you're making it better.



Creating Habits

The real secret, though, is in doing it. It's easy to know you should be physically active, it's another to have a physical fitness habit, so you don't even think about exercise. It's just like brushing your teeth in the morning. You just do it, because you just do it.





How long to create a habit?

14 days? 30 days? There is absolutely no scientific evidence to support these numbers. The plain truth is that how long it takes YOU to create a new habit depends on you, on what habit you're trying to form, on your motivation for starting the habit, how much pleasure you get from the habit, how much support you get from friends and family in starting the habit, and probably a host of other factors.

Sometimes you'll find it easy. Sometimes you have to keep working on it. Habits like exercise and meditation can be especially difficult to establish.

You are creating life long behaviors that will help you become the person you want to be and have the impact you want to have, so invest as much time in creating the habit as it takes.

The Science of Habits

I want to direct you to a wonderful book that breaks down the actual science of creating habit. You want to read [The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life And Business by Charles Duhigg](#).

I'll summarize for you the 4 keys to successfully creating a habit.

1. **Start Small:** Identify a small first step that you can take every single day. 1 minute of exercise. That's it. You can do one minute no matter what. And when you've got the habit down, then you can increase the amount of exercise.
2. **Piggyback on an Existing Trigger:** Your day is riddled with habits-- actions you take without even thinking about. Which one of those habits do you already have that you can use to start your new habit. For example, you can use starting your morning cup of coffee as a trigger for a minute of gratitude.



3. **Plan for Success by Planning for Failure:** Set yourself up for success by setting up what you need, where you need it so you can add your new habit with little or no thought. Anticipate the obstacles you are going to meet, and have a strategy for overcoming it.
4. **Reward Yourself:** It can take months for the long-term benefits of your new habit to kick in and that's just not enough to keep you motivated, so find a reward that keeps you happy until the long-term rewards of your new habit kick in.

A Little Help With That, Please!

Now, I know this is easier said than done, which is why I'm writing a book called Living Generously. Living Generously is the only book that helps you take a small action every day to help you become healthy in mind, body, and spirit so you can reach your full potential and make the world a better place.

The book will help you deal with situations like setting good boundaries and what to do when your family is undermining

your efforts. You can get the first 30 days of the book by emailing me at Sharon@LivingGenerouslyEveryDay.com and letting me know you want to review an advanced copy.

Try This...

In the meantime, visit our [Virtual Giving Circles website](#), because I can help you right now with the habit of Philanthropy. You can make small donations that go to the right charity and that make a really big difference.

You and I both know how easy to ease keep putting off making donations for a cause you care about. Some day, you tell yourself, you'll have more time and money, then you'll give back. But it doesn't work that way. There is no perfect someday. But you can do something right now. Just a little something right now. And you'll feel better about yourself, because you know you are the kind of person who walks the walk. You are doing something about what you care about. YOU are the change. Join now.

You'll be glad you did

About Me

Generosity Expert
Donation Defender



facebook.com/LivingGenerouslyEveryday



[SharonGives](https://twitter.com/SharonGives)



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What I've Done

I founded [Change Gangs: Virtual Giving Circles](#) because I believe your donation is a big deal, and I want to close the gap between the size of your wallet and the size of the impact you can make on your favorite cause.

I am the nationwide expert on Giving Circles and have created the [largest electronic repository](#) of information documenting the tools, strategies, and accomplishments of some of America's 800 giving circles.

I help people negotiate the giving pitfalls to make sure they give themselves what they need to be healthy in mind, body, and spirit so that they can help other. Read more at [Living Generously Every Day](#).

Ask Me to Speak

We're just getting started and there's so much more great information to share. I can help you or your organization...

- Find balance in your daily, hectic life.
- Get the biggest bang for your charity dollar.
- Feel even better about where and how you make a difference in the world through your charitable gifts.
- Discover the connection between giving and happiness and how to find meaning and purpose by giving to yourself, to others, and to the world.
- Avoid the giving pitfalls so you don't become exhausted, angry, or resentful about giving too much.

You will leave my presentations inspired about your ability to take care of yourself and take care of the world, because you will be armed with tools to make it happen again and again!



What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.

Henry Stanley Haskins



Share The 7 Generosity Habits



DID YOU ENJOY THIS BOOK?

I'd love it if you'd share it with others! Like it on Facebook. Tweet it. Link it.

Share the love.

