



Foundation *Insider*



Improve Your Health Through Charitable Giving

There is a Chinese saying that goes: *“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 other people.”* For centuries, the greatest thinkers have suggested the same thing, happiness is found in helping others.

We have all learned from an early age that it is better to give than receive. This venerable aphorism has been taught to all of us from an early age, but is there a deeper meaning to this established altruism? The resounding answer is yes. Scientific research provides compelling evidence to support that charitable giving enhances both personal growth and lasting happiness. Researchers are able to see brain activity when certain acts are taken and in a study on charitable giving when people donated to a worthy cause, the midbrain region lit up. This is the area of the brain that is responsible for cravings (food and sex) and pleasure rewards, showing the link between charitable giving and pleasure. To my knowledge, no study has been done looking at our brain activity when we have sex AND eat chocolate, so I can't say that charitable giving is similar to both at the same time, although I am personally volunteering for that study if there is a researcher seeking to confirm that concept.

This reward or pleasure response to giving is the physiological reason behind the “warm glow” or that good feeling you get when you give and why you choose to spend money on charity instead of yourself. As we all become chronologically challenged and more concerned about our personal health and life expectancy, it's great to know that charitable giving can have similar positive health results to spending thirty minutes at the health club.

Helping others may just be the secret to living a life that is not only happier, but also healthier, wealthier, more productive and meaningful. During the past twenty-three years, the Jewish Foundation of Greensboro has distributed over \$75 million from our affiliates and donors' accounts. That is an awful lot of happiness.

Freddy H. Robinson
Foundation Chair

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