

The Power of Giving

I am gearing up for the holiday season having spent a wonderful Friendsgiving. Sadly, my three children were not able to travel to California, but do not fear, I get a chance to be with them for Winter Break. Our family tradition is to try and explore a new destination every December. We love this tradition as we get to share in new experiences as a family: new food, new culture, new landscapes, and new languages. Sometimes we try to travel far from home, other times, just a different part of California. This shared experience brings us closer and allows us to build wonderful memories, even the crazy stories of lost luggage and lousy Airbnbs brings us closer together. Another family tradition I have tried to cultivate is the power of giving, specifically, the importance of giving back to our community and globally. You might be asking how this concept fits into the theme of wellness- the answer is very directly.

Research has shown that giving of oneself, whether it be with time, money or kindness, has great impact on the giver as well as the greater community. By giving of oneself to others, you can feel connected to something beyond your immediate concerns, worries or stress. By giving monetarily, or volunteering your time, or simply helping a neighbor with a project, you can build a sense of belonging that fosters greater emotional well-being, decreased depression and an improved sense of self-worth. Studies, have also shown positive impact on blood pressure, stress level and chronic health conditions.

There has been great focus on how random acts of kindness can have impact on you personally and your community. I encourage you to visit the Science of Kindness webpage where you can review the findings regarding the impact of kindness:

TEACHABLE : People can actually build up their compassion 'muscle' and respond to others' suffering with care and a desire to help. **CONTAGIOUS:** The positive effects of kindness are experienced in the brain of everyone who witnessed the act, improving their mood and making them significantly more likely to "pay it forward."

OXYTOCIN: Witnessing acts of kindness produces oxytocin, occasionally referred to as the 'love hormone' which aids in lowering blood pressure, improving our overall heart-health, increasing self-esteem and optimism.

ENERGY: About half of participants in one study reported that they feel stronger and more energetic after helping others;. **HAPPINESS:** A 2010 Harvard

By Dr. Margaret Rea

Business School survey of happiness in 136 countries found that people who are altruistic—in this case, people who were generous financially, such as with charitable donations—were happiest overall.

LIFESPAN: People who volunteer tend to experience fewer aches and pains. Giving help to others protects overall health twice as much as aspirin protects against heart disease. People 55 and older who volunteer for two or more organizations have an impressive 44% lower likelihood of dying early, and that's after sifting out every other contributing factor, including physical health, exercise, gender, habits like smoking, marital status and many more. This is a stronger effect than exercising four times a week or going to church.

PLEASURE : According to research from Emory University, when you are kind to another person, your brain's pleasure and reward centers light up, as if you were the recipient of the good deed—not the giver. This phenomenon is called the "helper's high." **SEROTONIN:** Like most medical antidepressants, kindness stimulates the production of serotonin. This feel-good chemical heals your wounds, calms you down, and makes you happy! Kindness decreases pain by producing endorphins and stress by decreasing cortisol. **ANXIETY:** A group of highly anxious individuals performed at least six acts of kindness a week. After one month, there was a significant increase in positive moods, relationship satisfaction and a decrease in social avoidance in socially anxious individuals.

DEPRESSION: Stephen Post of Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine found that when we give of ourselves, everything from life satisfaction to self-realization and physical health is significantly improved. Mortality is delayed, depression is reduced and well-being and good fortune are increased.

<https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/the-science-of-kindness>

As you head into the holiday season, also often called the season of giving, I encourage you to reflect upon the power that giving your time, your kindness, and your care can impact not only your community, but your own well-being. Wishing you all much joy, good health and much laughter in 2020- may you not only be the giver of kindness, but a recipient as well.

Wellness Events

Work Life and Wellness Events

<http://www.ucdavis.edu/hr/wellness/index.html>

UC Living Fit Forever

http://intranet.ucdavis.edu/clinops/resources/living_fit_forever.shtml

The Schwartz Center Rounds

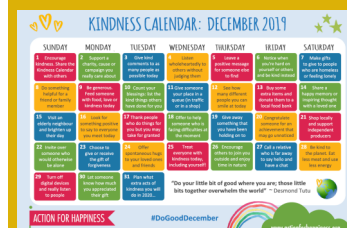
A multidisciplinary forum where clinical caregivers discuss social and emotional issues that arise in caring for patients. Occurs the 4th Tuesday of every month at the Cancer Center Auditorium:

<https://intranet.ucdavis.edu/palliativecare/schwartz.shtml>

Action for Happiness

This Do Good December kindness calendar has daily suggested actions to do throughout December 2019 to help you spread a bit more kindness in the world.

Download the calendar [here](#).



Wellness Tip: Mindfulness and Giving

Often during the craziness of the holiday season which for many of you students also includes the pressure of exams, the need for a Mindfulness break is even more crucial for your well-being. Consider the following:

1. **Set aside some time.** You don't need a meditation cushion or bench, or any sort of special equipment to access your mindfulness skills—but you do need to set aside some time and space.
2. **Observe the present moment as it is.** The aim of mindfulness is not quieting the mind, or attempting to achieve a state of eternal calm. The goal is simple: we're aiming to pay attention to the present moment, without judgment. Easier said than done, we know.
3. **Let your judgments roll by.** When we notice judgments arise during our practice, we can make a mental note of them, and let them pass.
4. **Return to observing the present moment as it is.** Our minds often get carried away in thought. That's why mindfulness is the practice of returning, again and again, to the present moment.
5. **Be kind to your wandering mind.** Don't judge yourself for whatever thoughts crop up, just practice recognizing when your mind has wandered off, and gently bring it back. That's the practice. It's often been said that it's very simple, but it's not necessarily easy. The work is to just keep doing it. Results will accrue.

<https://www.mindful.org/meditation/mindfulness-getting-started/>

It seemed fitting with the theme of this newsletter that a wellness tip should also include the powerful **act of giving** as a strategy to foster your well-being. Pause in your day and bring intention to how you would like to give. You might decide to:

- ◆ donate to a cause for which you are passionate
- ◆ volunteer an extra shift at the clinic
- ◆ take time, even though you are busy, for a phone call with a friend in need
- ◆ compliment someone
- ◆ make someone else's need or priority yours
- ◆ bring a treat to share during exam time

The options are endless. From these acts of giving can come a greater sense of happiness and peace for you and your community.

How to schedule a counseling appointment:

- On Sacramento Campus: medschoolcounseling@ucdavis.edu
- On Davis campus: (530)752-0871
<https://shcs.ucdavis.edu/counseling-services>
- Dr. Maggie Rea—Director of Student & Resident Wellness mrea@ucdavis.edu, (916) 703-9355

Crisis Services:

- Call 911 or go to the nearest ER
- 24/7 Phone Lines: If you have an emergency after hours, call SHCS 530-752-0871.
- Text RELATE to 741741
- Suicide Prevention 1 800- 273-TALK (8255)

Community Recipe

This month's recipe comes from Charlene Green, Director of Outreach, Recruitment and Retention at the School of Medicine.



Charlene shares her grandmother's [Cream Cheese Pound Cake](#) recipe! She has been making this cake since the age of 11 when her aunt taught her. "I used to sell this cake by the slice at my aunt's ice cream parlor in Niles, Michigan, where I spent my summers. Although, this was initially a family secret, after years of making it, I now enjoy sharing with others! I hope granny is not mad!" She is now passing this cherished recipe (along with her technique) to her children, Aminah (10) and Cyrus (6).



Wellness App: Giving

As you reflect upon the power that giving your time, your kindness, and your care can impact not only your community, but your own well-being. Here is an app that can support you in cultivating giving:



One Today makes it easy to support the nonprofit causes you care about. Quickly give \$1, or more. Get a real-world photo, short story, and simple explanation of what your dollars actually make better. Choose from a number of causes, browse new projects, and get inspired by others' generosity. Double your impact by inspiring others to match your donations. Generosity is contagious. So, share your projects. Spread random acts of kindness by paying it forward. Better you — Science shows that generosity can improve health and reduces stress.

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/one-today/id740270200?mt=8>