



How would you like a more optimistic and happier outlook on life? What about having abundant energy and stronger cardiovascular health? Or perhaps feeling connected to something bigger than yourself and powerful, rather than feeling lonely or helpless? You can have all of this and more. And this isn't an exaggeration. There's growing evidence that act of kindness, from you to another person(s), can improve your own life in all of these ways.

Most Canadians are generous and caring people. According to Statistics Canada, of those Canadians aged 15 and over:

- 84% (23 million people) made a financial donation to a charitable or nonprofit organization and the same percentage of people provided direct help to others who live outside their household (and not through an organization). Twenty-three million people!
- 46% (12.5 million people) volunteered their time. That's a lot of volunteered time!

At its heart, helping others is not about doing something for your own benefit. But it's a great bonus. Karma pays, big time. Here are just a few ways that you can make a difference in the world...and perhaps at the same time improve your health.



Volunteer. The possibilities are as endless as your ideas. Don't know how to start? Visit www.volunteer.ca and follow the links to find a Volunteer Centre near you. (Need a little incentive? Volunteering for a day in can earn you a one day admission pass to a Disney theme park. Read more about at volunteer.ca). Or visit our provincial volunteer website, <http://volunteeralberta.ab.ca/>.

Do something for the world's poorest people. There are many ways to help those who are much less fortunate. Consider sponsoring a child through an agency such as World Vision or Plan Canada. Commit to sending money to an aid agency such as the Canadian Red Cross, Oxfam Canada, or Doctors Without Borders. Or do something as simple as donate your used eyeglasses (many optometrists will accept the donation and distribute them accordingly). A small effort on your part can make a huge difference in this world that is our shared community.



Make a difference at your child's school. In these days of shrinking school budgets, parental involvement is needed to help schools do the best they can for their students. Join your PTA, participate in a career fair, use a vacation day to help out on a school field trip.

Help our planet's environment. There are hundreds of websites that provide great suggestions for helping the planet. Here are three suggestions: organize a group of people to pick up litter in your community; help your workplace develop a strategy to go "paperless;" or, implement a program to make your household "carbon neutral."

Make a change! When a friend or co-worker is experiencing loss and grief it is understandable to feel awkward and unsure of what is appropriate to say or do. If you are one of these people and would like to be better able to support people dealing with grief, here are a few suggestions:

- Accept and acknowledge all feelings, and let the grieving person know it is okay to cry in front of you.
- Don't say you understand, even if you have gone through something similar, as everyone's experience of grief is different.
- Offer comfort and reassurance without minimizing the loss.
- Be willing to sit in silence if the person doesn't feel like talking.
- Avoid telling them to be strong – people dealing with grief can feel very vulnerable.
- Write a personal note expressing your compassion.
- Don't give unsolicited advice.
- Ask what you can do.
- Continue your support after the initial shock has worn off.
- Encourage the grieving person to seek professional help if you see signs of a long-term problem developing.