

QuadMed Wellness News

"Pay it Forward" The Benefits of Volunteering

Overall well-being

Volunteering can provide a healthy boost to your self-confidence, self-esteem and overall satisfaction. Helping others and the community offers a natural sense of accomplishment, and your role as a volunteer can also increase a sense of pride and identity.

Risk of depression

A key risk factor for depression is social isolation. Volunteering keeps you in regular contact with others and helps

you develop a solid support system, which in turn protects you against stress and depression when you're going through challenging times. Working with pets and other animals has also been shown to improve mood and reduce stress and anxiety.

Physical health

Volunteering is good for your health at any age, but it's especially beneficial in older adults. Studies have found that those who volunteer have a lower mortality rate than those who do

not, even when considering factors like the health of the participants.

94% of people say volunteering improves their mood.

Volunteering can foster a deeper connection with others and with your community.

A core component of good health is to have a sense of purpose and meaning in your life. Studies have shown that those who volunteer agree that volunteering enriches their sense of purpose in life, that they are helping to make their community a better place and that volunteering helps them learn valuable things about the world and about themselves.

One of the best ways to make new friends and strengthen existing relationships is to commit to a shared activity together. Volunteering is a great way to meet new people, especially if you are new to an

area. It also strengthens your ties to the community and broadens your support network, exposing you to people with common interests, neighborhood resources and fun, fulfilling activities.

Volunteering gives you the



opportunity to practice and develop your social skills, since you are meeting regularly with a group of people with common interests. Once you have momentum, it's easier to branch out and make more friends and contacts.

While it might be a challenge to coordinate everyone's schedules, volunteering as a family has many worthwhile benefits. Children watch everything parents do. By giving back to the community, you show them firsthand how volunteering makes a difference and how worthy it feels to help other people or animals and enact change.

Noticeable values.

Manages and lowers stress levels

Volunteers are more likely than U.S. adults overall to report that they feel calm and peaceful and have a lot of energy most of the time. Doing well for others can help you reduce stress, and less stress is an important component of staying healthy.

Develops work-related skills

Time management

Volunteers schedule donating their time, choosing hours or days from leisure and family activities or rearranging busy schedules to be there for others.

Teamwork

Volunteers engage in many different types of activities, but activities often involve working collaboratively with other people, with organizations and in diverse community environments.

Professional skills

Different volunteer opportunities can also improve professional skills and build new ones when they include job-related skills— such as marketing, management or finance activities.

Colleague relationships

Some employers organize volunteer days or community activities for groups of employees. This provides an opportunity for co-workers to get to know each other outside the usual work environment.

Brings fun and fulfillment to your life

Doing volunteer work that you personally find meaningful and interesting can be a relaxing, energizing escape from your day-to-day routine of work, school or family commitments. Volunteering also provides you with renewed creativity, motivation and vision that can carry over into your personal and professional life.

Finding the right volunteer opportunity can help you allot time for your preferred activities and hobbies. For instance, if you have a desk job and long to spend time outdoors, you might consider volunteering to help plant a community garden, walk dogs for an animal shelter or help out at a children's camp.

The results are in on the benefits of volunteering.

- **96%** say that volunteering enriches their sense of purpose in life.
- **95%** say they are helping to make their community a better place.
- **87%** of people who said that volunteering helped their career responded that volunteering has developed their people skills and teamwork skills.
- **78%** of people say that volunteering lowers their stress levels.
- **76%** of people say that volunteering has made them feel healthier.
- **71%** agreed that volunteering has provided them with job-related contacts and networking opportunities.
- **64%** of employees said that volunteering with work colleagues has strengthened their relationships.
- **49%** of people new to volunteering said that volunteering has helped with their career in the paid job market.

