

PAYING IT FORWARD, PAYS BACK!

I have been involved in Pay It Forward (PIF) initiatives on and off over the last 10 years, with the emphasis on OFF more than ON. So, what is PIF? It is when the beneficiary of a good deed, repays the kindness to others not the originator. In doing so, there is a ripple effect across society that compounds its positive impact. 2020 really brought home the radical gap between the privileged minority and the suffering masses. Whilst my children seamlessly transitioned into blended learning, a lost generation is struggling. Not just in terms of education, but the looming prospect of [youth unemployment](#) in SA that now sits at an alarming 59%! Where do we start when the challenges seem so overwhelming? You start where you can, with what you have and what you are passionate about that fulfils a need in society. For me currently it is helping those that look after everyone else.... i.e., Doctors and Nurses at the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital. I help build their resilience skills and optimise their work context using my Organisational Development experience. Its work that feeds my soul and makes me feel more connected to my life's purpose, like no other.



NICE IDEA BUT ARN'T WE INHERENTLY SELFISH?

In 2013, the Oxford Dictionary proclaimed "selfie" its word of the year, with a staggering 17,000% increased usage in the previous year. It confirmed for many that social media had created a bunch of raging narcissists.

Some scholars have argued that we are a morally flawed species, driven by self-interest. They contend that without religious doctrine and/or strict ethical codes, we would have little desire to act altruistically. But according to Donald Pfaff, a neuroscientist at Rockefeller University, this perspective of human social behaviour is not supported by neuroscience. In his book [The Altruistic Brain](#), Pfaff argues that [altruism](#) is not a response to moral authority, but an instinct that is hard-wired into our brains. It allows us to be sensitive to what other people are thinking and feeling, to empathize with their suffering, to care about their welfare, and to translate that information into compassionate action. Many of these neural mechanisms may reside below our conscious awareness; but they exist and drive our actions. That is why we tend to develop rationalizations for why we act altruistically in a given situation, rationalizations that come after the fact, not before. But is this neuro-naivety or do we see this truly playing out in society?

In April 2020, soon after stay-at-home measures were issued, [researchers](#) launched an online survey to study stress and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey measured six potential sources of stress during the pandemic: contracting the virus; dying from the virus; currently having the virus; having a family member contract the virus; unknowingly infecting others; and experiencing a significant financial burden. The [study](#) involved 3,042 participants from the USA and Israel, ranging in age from 18 to 79, with approximately 20% being healthcare workers. Of those who participated, distress about family members contracting the virus (48.5%) and unknowingly infecting others (36%) outweighed distress associated with contracting the virus themselves (19.9%). It appears that people are significantly more worried (more than twice the rate) about others than themselves when reporting their COVID-19 related concerns. But do extreme events illicit unusual responses, and should we be careful to extrapolate too much from these insights?

The National Opinion Research Centre's landmark survey is the General Social Survey, which has been administered across a national sample of Americans 24 times since 1972. In their 2002 edition, they included an altruism question: "I feel a selfless caring for others." They found response rates to this question took on an almost bell-curve distribution: many times a day (9.8%), every day (13.2%), most days (20.3%), some days (24.0%), once in a while (22.3%), and never or almost never (10.4%). Feelings do not always translate into helping behaviour, but these results are [cause for hope](#) according to the Fetzer Institute.

But what about the pervasive mantras that proclaim: "You have to look out for yourself" or "Those people really know how to live...how to party" or "You have to be happy first before you can help others be happy." All are very common justifications for chasing happiness. But, who is happiest, the person devoted to having fun or the person intent on helping others? [Rimland](#) conducted a very simple experiment to test this. Why don't you try it right now. List the 10 people you know best. Rate each one as either happy or unhappy. Then, rate each one as self-centered (focusses on their own needs exclusively) or others-centered (cares about needs of others, and their own needs as well). Rimland found that happy people were significantly more likely to be unselfish than selfish. Ironically, happiness comes to people who have decided not to seek it as their main purpose in life. It comes as an unexpected fringe benefit to helpers.

There is [mounting evidence](#) that striving for power, fame, wealth, and material goods, large components of the vaunted "American Dream", more than for good relationships, personal growth, and altruism is associated with more anxiety, increased depression, and poorer general functioning. In short, materialism may be bad for your mental (and spiritual) health. As Erich [Fromm](#), the respected social psychologist observed, a focus on "having" distracts us from "being" our best person.

Interestingly, there are [many forms of behavioural games](#) that have experimented with altruism, e.g. the ultimatum game, dictator game and public goods game, that shows people will act altruistically even when unnecessary. [Previous behavioural research](#) suggests that humans willingly interact with strangers in ways that are beneficial to others, even when it is not in their own best interest. Additionally, humans have been [reported](#) to continue to engage in altruistic behaviours even in situations when there will be no future interaction.

Although considerable progress in behavioural and neuroimaging research clearly confirms that under a wide range of scenarios humans tend to behave altruistically, we also know that there exist scenarios where people do behave selfishly.

HOW ALTRUSIM WORKS

[Gratitude](#) seems to prepare the brain for generosity. Counting blessings is quite different to counting your wealth, because gratitude, just as philosophers and psychologists predict, points us toward moral behaviours, reciprocity, and pay-it-forward motivations. Our brain literally makes us feel richer when others do well. Perhaps this is why researchers have observed that grateful people give more.

We release oxytocin, which fine tunes our brains social instincts, by building and strengthening social bonds. Oxytocin makes us crave social connection, through touch, text message or a shared moment. It enhances our empathy and intuition. But its impact goes way beyond the social implications, surprisingly boosting our cardiovascular health. Our heart has special receptors for oxytocin, which helps heart cells regenerate and repair from micro-damage. When our stress response includes oxytocin, stress can literally strengthen our heart! [Research on rats](#) has illustrated this effect, and now we have [two longitudinal studies](#) on humans that illustrates this dynamic. In one of the [studies](#) they tracked 846 Americans, over 5 years. They asked participants how many major negative life events they had experienced in the last year. They also asked how much time they had spent helping friends, neighbours, and family members outside of their immediate household. They then tracked obituaries and official death records to see who had died. Among people who did not give back, each significant stressful life event increased the risk of dying by 30%. But participants who went out of their way to help others showed absolutely no stress-related increased risk of dying. It would seem a caring heart is also a healthy heart!

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is one of the most well-known psychology models describing our motivations. But what we are often taught, is his initial model and not his final version. In order to account for people like Mother Teresa, who were clearly self-actualized but also held an apparent desire to identify with something greater than the individual self, [Maslow set a higher](#)

[motivational level above self-actualization](#). He named this motivational level "self-transcendence." At the level of self-actualization, the individual works to actualize the individual's own potential [whereas] at the level of transcendence, the individual's own needs are put aside, to a great extent, in favour of service to others. Certainly the image of the best developed human being that emerges from Maslow's hierarchy is very different depending on which of these two stages is placed at the top of the motivational hierarchy. Indeed, according to Maslow's final theory, the purpose of life is not to perfect oneself, but to transcend oneself by connecting with others. This is a radical new understanding of one of the dominant theories in modern psychology. If you look at the levels in his hierarchy, paying it forward certainly has the potential to boost the recipients at the physiological, safety and esteem levels; and for the PIF giver it can enhance their own sense of esteem, self-actualisation, and self-transcendence. Interestingly the belonging need can be amplified for both the giver and the receiver. When we reflect on the [high levels of isolation and premature death](#) as result of lack of belonging, we appreciate the central role PIF can play.

Adam Grant, in his book "[Give and Take](#)", argues that there are three types of individuals in the world: givers, takers, and matchers. Givers are altruistic. They give more to others than they receive. Takers, on the other hand, are largely self-serving. They constantly ask, "What's in it for me?" They form relationships with an eye on advancing their own agendas. Matchers fall in the middle of the spectrum. They believe that relationships should be largely reciprocal in nature and tend to give as much to others as they receive.

Which type of worker do you think is most effective in the workplace? The answer may surprise you. Grant's research revealed that givers are both the most and least effective type of employee in the workplace. It turns out that being a giver has many downsides. Givers put others first without any expectations of return. This causes them to gain trust. But it can also be dangerous when manipulative people take advantage of them. There is an art and science associated with being a successful giver in the workplace which will be discussed later in this article. If you are interested in assessing where you fall into these dimensions go to www.giveandtake.com and you can also ask people in your network to rate your reciprocity style.

PAY IT FORWARD & ITS SURPRISINGLY RECIPROCAL BENEFITS

When we think of altruism, we automatically assume that the benefits accrue for the receiver, when in fact there is a multitude of benefits that the giver also gains. They include.....

Mental fitness benefits:

There is [some evidence](#) to suggest that when you help others, it can promote physiological changes in the brain linked with happiness. Helping others can also improve our support networks and encourage us to [be more active](#). This in turn can improve our [self-esteem](#).

Altruism helps keep things in perspective, see my [20-20 vision](#) article I recently wrote regarding this. By changing the lenses through which we see our context, we can make different choices and build our resilience. Helping others, especially those who are less fortunate than ourselves, can put things into perspective and make us feel more positive. Being aware of our own acts of kindness, as well as the things we are grateful for, can increase feelings of [happiness](#), [optimism](#), and [satisfaction](#). It may also encourage others to [repeat the good deed](#) that they've experienced themselves, contributing to a virtuous loop that builds a more [positive community](#). Volunteerism benefits (as a subset of altruism) include reduction in [depressive symptoms](#), increased happiness, and [enhanced well-being](#).

Deliberately performing random acts of kindness can make you feel happier and [less depressed and anxious](#), according to a [series of studies](#) from Sonja Lyubomirsky at UC Riverside.

Altruism has also been associated with resilience in both [adults and children](#). [Staub and Vollhardt](#) examined case studies and qualitative studies where individuals' victimization and suffering bred prosocial behaviour, ultimately promoting recovery from trauma, post-traumatic growth, and resilience, and suggested that post-traumatic interventions may promote "altruism born of suffering."

Spiritual fitness - Purpose benefits:

[Researchers](#) have found a stronger link between kindness and what is known as eudaimonic well-being (which focuses on self-actualization, realizing one's potential and finding meaning in life), than between kindness and hedonic well-being (which refers to a focus on pleasure seeking). Altruism is often the cornerstone of spiritual fitness as it's the tangible manifestation of our [TRIFECTA](#) (Purpose, Code and Goal-setting). The question one needs to ask, do you want to purely achieve, or do you want to achieve and be of sound character? The latter leads to a higher impact outcome into transformation and is what often defines the people we laud as heroes and saints.

Socio-emotional fitness - Relationship benefits:

Volunteerism (a form of altruism) creates a sense of belonging and reduces [loneliness and isolation](#) by [making new friends](#) and re-connecting with our [community](#).

Altruism is associated with better life adjustment, marital adjustment, and satisfaction. Being interested in and committed to wide social networks helps you to moderate stress to such an extent that it becomes a good predictor of your physical health status. MIT researchers [Schwartz and colleagues](#) who made these findings also think that the links between social interest, better mental resilience and reduced stress are in turn related to augmented self-confidence, an increased ability to be able to reframe one's own experience and perceived greater meaning in life. Yet more evidence comes from the influential Hawaiian longitudinal study in a [Nature-Nurture post](#) which found that children who helped others in a meaningful way (i.e. assisting a family member, neighbour or some other community member) were the most likely to lead successful lives as adults.

Altruism builds our [socio-emotional fitness](#) as altruism requires that we are caring, empathetic, we listen and observe what people want and need and then we take responsibility and act on these observations. In addition, it is a marvellous antidote to [toxic behaviours](#) in the workplace as it provides a prosocial counterpoint that people can align and strive for.

Physical fitness benefits:

Compassion has been [shown](#) to help stabilise the immune system against immunosuppressing effects of stress. When you help others, it promotes positive physiological changes in the brain associated with happiness, and repairs the heart. So, whilst it is true that we are hard-wired to notice the negative, we are also hard-wired toward compassion and altruism. Research suggests that the “warm glow” you experience from altruistic actions may be associated with the neurotransmitter [oxytocin](#).

[Oman](#), a leading researcher in the altruism field from University of California at Berkeley, studied 2,025 respondents, who were 55 or older at the initial baseline examination; 58% whom were women. Residents were classified as practicing “high volunteerism” if they were involved in two or more helping organizations and as practicing “moderate volunteerism” if they were involved in one. The number of hours invested in helping behaviour was also measured, although this was not as predictive as the number of organizations they volunteered for. Physical health status was assessed based on reported medical diagnoses, as well as such factors as “tiring easily” and self-perceived overall health. 31% (n = 630) of these participants participated in some kind of volunteer activity, and about half volunteered for more than one organization. Those who volunteered for two or more organizations experienced a 63% lower likelihood of dying during the 5-year longitudinal study period than did non-volunteers. Even after controlling for age, gender, number of chronic conditions, physical mobility, exercise, self-rated general health, health habits (smoking), social support (marital status, religious attendance), and psychological status (depressive symptoms), this effect was only reduced

to a still highly significant 44%. Multivariate adjusted associations indicated that moderate volunteerism was not statistically significant after controlling for health status. High volunteerism (two or more organisations) remained significantly associated with lower mortality rates. Notably, the “44 %” reduction in mortality associated with high volunteerism in this [study](#) was larger than the reductions associated with physical mobility (39%), exercising four times weekly (30%), and was only slightly smaller than the reduction associated with not smoking (49%)!

In a [recent survey](#) of over 10,000 people in the U.K., two-thirds reported that volunteering helped them feel less isolated. Similarly, a [2018 study](#) of nearly 6,000 people across the U.S. examined widows who, unsurprisingly, felt lonelier than married adults. After starting to volunteer for two or more hours per week, their average level of loneliness subsided to match that of married adults, even after controlling for demographics, baseline health, personality traits and other social involvement. These benefits may be especially strong the [older you are](#) and the [more often](#) you volunteer. Second, volunteering can make up for the loss of meaning that commonly occurs with loneliness. Research has shown that more loneliness is [associated](#) with less meaning. This makes sense, given our deeply rooted [need for belonging](#). By volunteering for social causes that are important to us, we can gain a sense of purpose, which in turn may shield us from negative health outcomes. For example, purpose in life has been linked to a [reduced](#) likelihood of stroke and [greater](#) psychological well-being.

Business benefits:

There's [meta-analysis by Nathan Podsakoff](#) that looked at 38 studies of organizational behaviour tracked over more than 3500 business units across industries. It turns out there is a strong link between helping behaviours and desirable business outcomes. For example, high rates of giving predicted profitability, productivity and customer satisfaction, as well as lower turnover. When you have groups of employees willing to give, there is more shared knowledge and innovation. The wealth gets spread, as opposed to an organization with a few givers who can get sucked dry by takers.

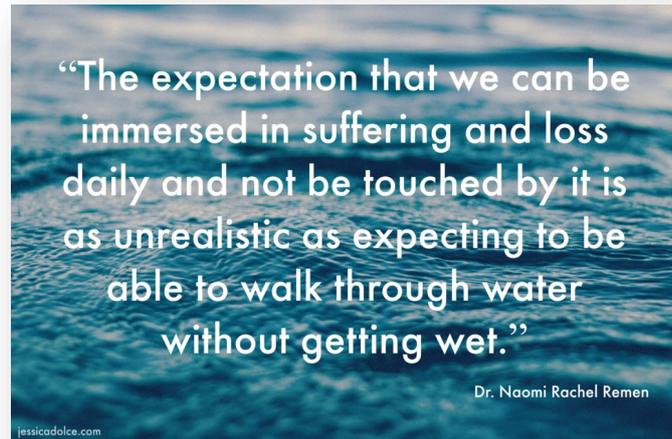
Together, all these studies suggest that altruistic behaviours not only benefit others but also have profound positive effects on the current and future physical and psychological well-being of the person performing the behaviour. Altruism results in deeper and more positive social integration, distraction from personal problems and the anxiety of self-preoccupation, enhanced meaning and purpose as related to well-being, a more active lifestyle that counters cultural pressures toward isolated passivity, and the presence of positive emotions such as kindness that displace harmful negative emotional states. It is entirely plausible, then, to assert that altruism enhances both mental and physical health.

DOWNSIDERS OF ALTRUISM

Unselfishly doing nice things for others sounds like a great thing, right? But too much altruism can actually be a bad thing. [Pathological altruism](#) is when people take altruism to the extreme and hit a point where their actions cause more harm than good. Some common examples of pathological altruism include animal hoarding and the depression often seen in healthcare professionals.

[Compassion Fatigue](#) (CF) is an accumulation of trauma-related symptoms which are initiated by traumatic events experienced vicariously. Those symptoms, combined with empathy for the victim, result in "fatigue" from caring so much. In other words, CF occurs when a person empathizes with the victims of trauma and internalizes their fear, horror, pain, and feelings of helplessness. Burnout differs from CF in that the worker

experiences exhaustion caused by various work-related stressors but not by experiencing a traumatic event either personally or vicariously. CF can result in what is called the [caregiver's dilemma](#), often where healthcare professionals may see themselves as trapped in a double bind. Do they keep connecting with their patients but wear down in the process, or preserve themselves by turning their empathy off? Whether they consciously are aware of it or not, many clinicians seem to make the second choice. Medical students' empathy declines sharply in their third year of training, just when they begin regular patient contact. Physicians may exhibit blunted physiological empathy, and both nurses and physicians can underestimate patients' pain and suffering. Some caregivers engage in defensive dehumanisation, whereby they reduce their distress by ignoring or denying patients' emotions. These strategies might protect caregivers in the short term, but can damage the therapeutic alliance, undermine clinicians' ability to treat the whole person, and leave patients feeling alienated. A close friend of mine, who is ex-Special Forces, suffered a serious heart attack. His chilling observation was that the most traumatic part was when he was in intensive care in a private hospital, where he was ignored and kept in the dark regarding his condition. To stay sane, he had to employ his resisting interrogation principles!! Measure your compassion fatigue using the [Professional Quality of Life Scale](#).



Yet the caregiver's dilemma is a [false choice](#). Systemic changes, such as reducing administrative burden, efforts to foster positive learning environments, and creation of strong peer support networks, can help. So can individual-level practices such as mindfulness, counselling, and self-care. And crucially, research from psychology and neuroscience offers strategies for sustainable empathy, through which clinicians can emotionally connect with their patients without sacrificing themselves. Two insights are especially worth considering. Emotional empathy, especially taking on others' distress, is a risk factor for burnout and fatigue among physicians, but empathic concern may help reduce the risk of those same negative outcomes. In other words, caregivers need not choose between their own wellbeing and empathy for their patients. If they can feel for patients and families without feeling as they do, empathy can be both connective and sustainable. This is especially useful given the second insight: empathy is a skill. Crucially, this means that through the choices we make and habits we adopt, people can purposefully grow, broaden, and fine-tune their capacity for care.

There are [three traps](#) according to Adam Grant that Givers fall into, they are: 1) timidity 2) time drainers and subsequent burnout/non-delivery 3) over-empathising at own personal expense. He proposes: 1) Timidity solutions: managers can teach employees who are uncomfortable with self-advocacy to shift their frames of reference and advocate for others using relational accounts. The first step is to ask employees to think of others who share their interests. A colleague, perhaps, or a customer, supplier, direct report, friend, or family member? Having identified a beneficiary, the employee might make a verbal commitment to help that person. Then it's time to target the right audience and begin to advocate, making all due reference to those relational accounts. 2) Time drainers solutions: instead of accommodating every request for help, givers need to set boundaries. When dealing with takers, givers can be *matchers*. Instead of helping with no strings attached, matchers hold takers accountable for their behaviour, helping them only if they will reciprocate by helping the matcher, or others, in return. As for how to help, leaders can prompt reflection on the types of giving that are best aligned with the giver's skills, interests, and values. The more a giver becomes known for offering specific kinds of help, the less likely people are to pile on miscellaneous requests. Over time the questions directed toward that giver will become more aligned with his or her expertise and enjoyment, making giving more sustainable. [Studies](#) show that when helping is based on a sense of mastery and personal choice rather than duty and obligation, it's more likely to be energizing than exhausting. 3) Over-empathising at own expense solutions: a reorientation to perspective taking is likely to come more naturally to givers than shifts to greater assertiveness and bounded availability will. Givers excel at understanding other people's thoughts as well as their feelings, because concern for others involves getting to know their backgrounds and values. Givers allow themselves to become pushovers when they fail to gather and use knowledge about others' interests. By putting this skill into action, it's possible to transform win/lose scenarios into mutually beneficial gains.

There are real payoffs associated with teaching employees about the power of agency, boundaries on availability, and perspective taking. The first is saving your best employees, those who exemplify collegial generosity, from being taken advantage of and helping them to gain stature as successful givers instead. The second is enabling employees who fear the risks of giving to contribute more to others and to the success of the enterprise. The third is creating a culture of and reputation for generosity that attracts more givers to your organization and appeals less to takers. If you wish to assess whether you are selfless/sustainable giver do this [quick assessment](#).

HOW ALTRUISTIC ARE YOU REALLY?

[Altruism](#) is behaviour intended to benefit another, even when this action risks possible sacrifice to the welfare of the giver. There are several critical aspects to altruism:(a) Altruism must entail action. Good intentions or well-meaning thoughts do not constitute altruism. (b) The action is goal-directed, although this may be either conscious or reflexive. (c) The goal must be to further the welfare of another. If another's welfare is merely an unintended or secondary consequence of behaviour designed primarily to further the actor's own welfare, the act is not altruistic. (d) Intentions count more than consequences. So how altruistic are you?

Brief, automated scoring altruism assessment: adapted from the Helping Attitude Scale and automated by [Berkeley's Greater Good](#), is a starting point, whilst providing some interesting research findings relative to people's responses and ways to build your altruism.

Two alternatives for assessing altruism: the [Altruistic Personality Scale](#) measures altruistic tendencies by gauging the frequency that a person engages in prosocial behaviours. Altruistic behaviour in the workplace, which involves actions by an organization's employees who are meant to help others but are not formally rewarded, has been studied using the [Organizational Citizenship Behaviour Scale](#). It measures five facets of workplace altruism, namely: civic duty, altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship and courtesy.

What if I don't like what I see? What is wrong with putting your happiness and financial success first? (i.e. get yours first, like trickle-down economics.) Your choice between (a) happiness or wealth and (b) helping as your highest purpose could have a profound impact on your entire life. Keep in mind that few people are able to follow their highest values all the time; the caring person is selfish in some ways, and the dedicated hedonist occasionally helps others. However, without your [highest value](#) in the forefront of your consciousness, day by day, your life is not likely to be as meaningful and impactful.

Fortunately, altruism can be developed. [Research](#) from the University of Wisconsin's Centre for Investigating Healthy Minds found that individuals can be neurologically trained to become more compassionate.

BUILDING THE ALTRUISM HABIT

Altruism will not occur in the absence of sufficient motive, means and opportunity. But we need to be careful in assuming that caring is some tree-hugging management fad. [Academic research](#) across industries shows that organisations that promote caring create more value. PepsiCo's first guiding principle is caring, online retailer Zappos has it as a core value, as does collaborative software company Slack. LinkedIn practices "compassionate management." None of these companies would be labelled flaky ito business success.

Below are four nudges encouraging the kindness and generosity motive. Click on the link at the end of each strategy for more detailed instructions on how to perform them.

Create reminders of connectedness. Research suggests that when people are reminded of human connection, they behave more altruistically, even when those connection reminders are very subtle. Something as simple as a quote evoking shared goals, words like "community," or a picture conveying warmth or friendships, they can all have an impact. Take a moment to look around your home, office, or classroom and consider how you could add words, images, or objects that communicate connection. For more on this technique, see the [Reminders of Connectedness](#) practice.

Put a human face on a problem. We are more likely to want to help others if we view them as individuals, not just abstract statistics. To motivate people to give their time or resources to a cause, like aiding in disaster relief, present them with a personal story of a single, identifiable victim, ideally accompanied by a photo. This will help them feel a greater sense of personal connection and concern, especially if they are of a similar age to the victim or have other things in common. It is important not to overwhelm others with too many stories or facts, they can have the paradoxical effect of impeding the urge to give. For more on this technique, see the practice about [Putting a Human Face on Suffering](#).

Encourage identification with "out-group" members. One of the greatest barriers to altruism is that of group difference: We feel much less obligated to help someone if he or she does not seem to be a member of our "in-group", we may even feel hostile toward members of an "out-group." But research suggests that who we see as part of our "in-group" can be malleable. That is why a key to promoting altruism is emphasizing similarities that cut across group boundaries. On the broadest level, this could mean remembering that regardless of our political, cultural, or religious affiliations, we are all human beings and share common human experiences. For more on this technique, see the [Shared Identity](#) practice.

Build momentum. Benjamin Franklin said one should ask two questions each day: Morning question: "What good should I do today?", and an evening question: "What good have I done today."

CREATIVE WAYS TO MAKE A PIF DIFFERENCE

PIF is an art form, it creatively harnesses compassion, kindness and/or faith in society. The more you practice PIF, the richer and more vibrant our world can become.

When deciding what to act on, consider the following:

- 1) In person activation, rather than purely donating money has longer term positive impacts for the giver;
- 2) Align your passion with a real societal need (in doing so you can both hone and leverage a skill, whilst simultaneously discovering your [TRIFECTA](#) (Purpose, Code and Goal-setting));
- 3) Repeated experiences, so you build impact whilst stimulating your oxytocin levels.

Here are some thoughts on how to create the means and opportunity for PIF to flourish:

In the moment PIF boosters:

What if volunteering is not your vibe? **Then maybe random acts of kindness are for you.**

[Hui and his colleagues](#) found that random acts of kindness, such as helping a neighbour carry groceries, were more strongly associated with overall well-being such as scheduled volunteering for a charity.

Find ways to perform small, random acts of kindness during your day. These acts can be incredibly simple, from paying for the persons coffee directly behind you in the queue, to engaging a co-worker you do not usually talk with in non-superficial conversation. If you are struggling for inspiration (or live in a remote place) try the highly informative [Random Acts of Kindness Foundation](#), a treasure chest of ideas for workplaces, schools, communities.

Techno PIF boosters:

Contribute to open-source projects. An open-source program means that its source code is free for anyone to modify and make copies of for their own use. Similarly, to when someone adds their knowledge to a Wikipedia page, it is considered an act of altruism to edit a project's source code and make it better.

Fancy yourself as a social media influencer? Then why not use your power for good? Social media is a particularly great medium for brands to foster digital altruism. Greta Thunberg's, 2019 Times Person of the Year, use of Instagram and Twitter to protest the lack of action around climate change is a classic example of its power. Her [#Friday'sForFuture climate strikes](#) went viral, inspiring millions to reshare her posts, driving nation-wide awareness of the climate crisis. The Body Shop, which champions cruelty-free beauty and skincare products, launched

a [#ForeverAgainstAnimalTesting](#) campaign to petition against animal cruelty. As a result, it took 8.3 million voices from all over the world to the United Nations.

Inspiring customers to use their purchasing power is a form of activism. While supporting digital altruism does not have to involve money, making a conscious effort to purchase from brands that make an impact is another way customers can act altruistically online.

Progress PIF boosters:

Make meaningful introductions. This may not be something that always comes immediately to mind when you think about altruism, but institutionalised social exclusion and poorly developed business networks impede creativity and collaboration, not to mention access to opportunities.. this can even extend to meaningful, unsolicited testimonials if you are in a position of authority/well known.

Offer mentorship or be a listening ear. Regardless of age or profession everyone can benefit from a [mentor](#) in some aspect of their life. Finding one can be tricky, but [KarmaCircles](#) has created an app for micro-giving. Sharing your time, knowledge, and experiences with others following in your footsteps, creates a feedback loop for personal development that strengthens the human experience. As the saying goes: "Be the mentor you wish you had." I almost never turn down an invitation to present at conferences or a coffee chat with people entering my field. I was blessed with good advice and inputs early on and feel I should pay it onwards. I find this has often unintentionally translated into future [reciprocal](#) business opportunities, sometimes years down the line.

Peer learning groups. People often experience similar corporate challenges but suffer in silence. Peer learning groups can be especially powerful in this regard. If you want to add a tech layer go to [www.humaxnetworks.com](#) which offers a suite of social networking tools for individuals and organisations. They have also created tools to run what they call "reciprocity rings" in person and a Rippleffect tool for running it online. The added benefit of peer learning groups is powerful networks of relationships extending across the organisation.

Secret mission's ala 007! Help people craft their jobs by getting them involved in projects of their choosing, with the proviso that it meets these three requirements: appeals to at least one other collaborator in the organisation; low or no cost; and can be initiated and run by them. Get them to reflect on their interests/hobbies that they would like to do at the work. This is a mild version of job crafting, for more information on the science and application of job crafting watch this [video](#).

Teach someone else a skill you have mastered. Growth is a highly sought-after experience and underpins our progress. There is almost always someone else trying to pick up the skills that you already have. Why not help others along, saving them time and money. It is the ultimate investment as our time/energy is our most valuable, seemingly non-renewable resource, but you are planting trees for future generations.

Lifesaving PIF boosters:

Donate blood, become a registered organ donor etc. No hyperbole here, it is the ultimate “gift of life.” We often take for granted our health until suddenly we can't. Local blood drives make the process as convenient as possible and add immediate aid to the healthcare community.

Purpose driven PIF boosters:

Some recommended institutions. There are countless organisations that are making a difference, here are some very well-known ones that may appeal to professionals who can add their skills to causes close to their hearts: [Rotary](#), [Gift of the Givers](#), [Peace Corps](#), [Doctors without borders](#), [Habitat for Humanity](#), [UNICEF](#); [Amnesty International](#); [Greenpeace](#).

Social impact: A site well-worth exploring is [80 000 hours](#). It covers which global problems are most pressing, how you can best contribute to solving these problems, and how to plan your career based on your individual strengths and context. It is especially aimed at graduates aged 20-35 who want to ambitiously focus on social impact, though much of it is relevant more broadly. For those that want to independently deep dive into the question of how to change the world for good but are looking for a way to structure their thinking, effective altruism has some practical [flowcharts](#) you can explore.

In closing, life presents us with many opportunities to Pay it forward, often when we least expect it. As long as we live consciously and shift our focus from navel-gazing to caring for those around us. Ironically, in doing so we all end up benefitting, now that is a worthy Win-Win!!!

