

THRIVE  GLOBAL



POINTS OF LIGHT



GUIDE TO

# Volunteering

Thrive Global and Points of Light are partnering to highlight the ways we can all have an impact. Because everyone has the power to create change. And every action, no matter how small, is significant – and can even change a life.

What makes volunteering so powerful is that its benefits go two ways. One study demonstrated that volunteering at least once a week yields improvements to well-being tantamount to your salary increasing from \$20,000 to \$75,000. A Harvard Business School study found that students who were told to spend a small amount of money on someone else were happier than students who were told to spend it on themselves. And a University of Exeter Medical School study found that volunteering was connected to lower rates of depression, higher reports of well-being, and a significant reduction in mortality risk.

As Arianna Huffington [writes](#), “Giving — going beyond ourselves and stepping out of our comfort zones to serve others — is one of the most effective and proven ways to boost our well-being, transforming the giver as much as the recipient.”

This guide will help you reframe limiting beliefs about volunteering and introduce Microsteps that help you give back, with benefits that extend both inward and outward.





## Shifting Your Mindset

It's all too easy to decide we don't have time to volunteer — especially when we're managing challenges of our own and navigating the ongoing stress and uncertainty of the pandemic. And when the world is facing such big problems, what difference could we possibly make?

We might also have limiting beliefs that get in the way of our being able to make a difference in small ways that count. For example, we might think, "I'm just one person so I can't make a difference" or "I don't have time to volunteer." Or we simply might not know where to start.

But as former President George H.W. Bush, founder of Points of Light, put it, "The solution to each problem that confronts us begins with an individual who steps forward and who says, 'I can help.'"

By shifting our mindset away from big solutions to instead focus on small steps, we can move past some of the common limiting beliefs that hold us back from connecting with others and having an impact.

That's where Microsteps come in. The challenges we face are big, but we can help ourselves, and one another, by starting small.





## Having an Impact with Microsteps

As we know from our own experience, small gestures, acts and connections can have a big impact. Here are five Microsteps to help you turn that awareness into action.

### Microsteps

#### Get involved in one issue you find personally meaningful.

Passively watching increases feelings of helplessness, which in turn fuels outrage and stress. Take a few minutes to research an issue you care about. Chances are, there will be groups that can show you how to channel your frustration into action.

#### Find one small way to give that draws on your own talents.

Think about a skill you have and find a way to share it with someone else. Focusing on what you can do now will push back on any feelings of helplessness and allow you to have an impact.

#### Each day, spend time on someone else, even if you're busy.

Helping, listening, or simply being present for someone else can benefit both you and whoever you're helping. Research shows that when we spend time on others, our sense of our own time actually expands.

#### Ask someone what they're doing to give back.

Social distancing can make us feel further apart, not just physically but emotionally. Bridge the distance with a simple question — you might learn something, or get inspired by ways they're giving back and making a difference.

#### Perform one small act of kindness for someone each day.

From holding the door for a stranger to lending a hand to a colleague, these micro moments of giving will make others feel valued and fill you with a sense of purpose.

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## Resources and Further Reading

Visit [Points of Light's Volunteer webpage](#) to discover a nonprofit near you, find DIY projects and volunteer opportunities, and ways to recognize the volunteers in your life.

Search [Points of Light Engage](#), the world's largest digital hub for at-home and in-person volunteering and community engagement opportunities.

Read Points of Light's digital magazine, [Civic Life Today](#), to learn different ways individuals can become civically engaged.