

## Scientific Research, References, and Important Commentary on Generosity

Below you will find resources that will be helpful as you explore the science and wisdom of why generosity is a truly unique human superpower. These citations do not cover the entirety of the continually growing body of literature, but it does provide a solid basis for how and why being generous will change your brain, body, relationships, life, and the world.

This is a living document, and we welcome new suggestions.

**NEUROSCIENCE:** There is ample evidence that our brains respond strongly, and positively, to giving and receiving acts of generosity. No matter how large or small, we're wired towards kindness.

- [A Neural Link Between Generosity and Happiness](#). Park, S., Kahnt, T., Dogan, A. *et al. Nature Communications* 8, 15964 (July 2017).
- [Linking Brain Structure and Activation in Temporoparietal Junction to Explain the Neurobiology of Human Altruism](#). Morishima, Y., et al. *Neuron*, Volume 75, Issue 1, 73 - 79 (July 2012).
- [Why We Humans are Hard-Wired for Generosity](#). McQuiston, B. and Santi, J. *Abbott* (February 2017).
- [Altruistic Behavior: Mapping Responses in the Brain](#). Filkowski M., Cochran R., Haas B. *Neurosci Neuroecon* 5:65-75 (November 2016).

**WELLBEING AND HAPPINESS:** Generous behavior not only changes how we think, but how our bodies respond and heal. Health experts know quality and quantity of life are closely connected to doing good for others and yourself.

- [The Helper's High](#). Dossey, L. *Science Direct*, Volume 14, Issue 6, Pages 393-399 (November 2018).
- [Prosocial Behavior Leads to Happiness in a Small-Scale Rural Society](#). Aknin, L., Broesch, T., Hamlin, J., & Van de Vondervoort, J. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 144(4), 788-795 (August 2015).
- [Why Giving Is Good for Your Health: Helping Others Can Boost Your Heart and Mind](#). *Health Essentials*, The Cleveland Clinic (December 2022).
- [3 Ways Generosity Can Improve Your Health](#), Geisinger (October 2021).

**LEADERSHIP:** Generous leaders work to ensure individuals win as people. This means strong teams, better results, and collaborative work. Employees and clients will see and feel the difference.

- [The Secret to Success is Giving, Not Taking](#). Cook, G. *Scientific American* (April 2013).
- [Don't Underestimate the Power of Kindness at Work](#). Sezer, O., Nault, K., and Klein, N. *Harvard Business Review* (May 2021).
- [An Initial Examination of State and Longitudinal Effects of Loving-Kindness Practice on Affective and Motivational States at Work](#). Masters-Waage, T., Reb, J., and Tov, W. *Mindfulness*. 1-14 (October 2021).

**SELF-GENEROSITY:** Your subconscious mind responds positively to generosity. Every step you take towards becoming the person you aspire to be is a gift to yourself. This is difficult for many, but necessary for personal and professional growth.

- [Why Generosity is Good for YOU](#). Firestone, L. *PsychAlive* (March 2013).
- [The Art of Kindness](#). Siegle, S. *Mayo Clinic Health Systems* (August 2023).
- [The Relationship Between Self-Compassion and Well-Being: A Meta-Analysis](#). Zessin, U., Dickhäuser, O. and Garbade, S. *International Association of Applied Psychology*, Volume 7, Issue 3 (August 2015).
- [How to Increase Serotonin in the Human Brain Without Drugs](#). Young S. *Journal of Psychiatry & Neuroscience*, 32(6):394-9 (November 2007).

**COMPOUNDING IMPACT:** Acts of generosity impact not only those who receive and give, but those who witness. The ripple effect of one generous act has untold benefits to individuals and thus, to the world.

- [The Social Contagion of Generosity](#). Tsvetkova M. and Macy M. *PLoS One*, 13;9(2):e87275 (February 2014).
- [Happiness Runs in Circular Motion: Evidence for a Positive Feedback Loop Between Prosocial Spending and Happiness](#). Aknin, S., Dunn, E. and Norton, M. *Journal of Happiness Studies* (April 2011).
- [Cooperative Behavior Cascades in Human Social Networks](#). Fowler, J. and Christakis, N. *PNAS*, Volume 107 (12) 5334-5338 (November 2009).

**SOCIAL NORMS:** Studies have shown that people are more likely to be generous when they perceive that generosity is the norm or expected behavior in their group or society.

- [Gratitude and Prosocial Behavior: Helping When It Costs You](#). Bartlett, M. and DeSteno, D. *Psychological Science*, Volume 17 (4) (April 2006).

- [Social Norms](#). Bicchieri, C., Muldoon, R., and Sontuoso, A. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (July 2018).
- [Resting State Brain Subnetwork Relates to Prosociality and Compassion in Adolescence](#). Sipes, B., Jakary, A, Li, Y, et al. *Frontiers in Psychology*, Volume 13 (October 2022).
- [A Focus Theory of Normative Conduct: Recycling the Concept of Norms to Reduce Littering in Public Places](#). Cialdini, R., Reno, R., and Kallgren, C. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58(6), 1015-1026 (June 1990).
- [People Try To Do Right By Each Other, No Matter The Motivation, Study Finds](#). *Ohio State News* (June 2020).

#### ARTICLES & BLOGS:

- [The Benefits of Generosity](#). Firestone, L. *Huffington Post* (June 2014).
- [How Generosity Changes Your Brain](#). Johnson, S. *Big Think* (August 2021).
- [Generosity Makes You Happier](#). Cohut, M. *Medical News Today* (July 2017).
- [Selfish People Earn Less Money Than Their More Generous Friends](#). Renzulli, K. *CNBC* (November 2018).
- [7 Ways That Generosity Can Lead To Success](#). Adams, S. *Forbes Magazine* (April 2013).
- [The Power of Generosity](#). Malanowski, J. *Success Magazine* (November 2015).
- [9 Ways Generous People See The World Differently](#). Becker, J. *Becoming Minimalist*.
- [The Power Of Authentic Generosity To Strengthen Relationships](#). Sobel, A.
- [When In Doubt, Be Generous](#). Goins, J.

#### PODCASTS:

- [Pursuit of Happiness](#). Laurie Santos. *The Knowledge Project with Shane Parrish* (June 2022).
- [The Science of Singing Along](#). *The Science of Happiness Podcast*. Berkeley (October 2023).
- [Relationships versus Transactions](#). Jim Collins. *The Knowledge Project with Shane Parrish* (May 2021).
- [Hospitality and Humanity](#). Danny Meyer. *The Knowledge Project with Shane Parrish* (July 2021).
- [Generosity](#). Brooke Castillo. *The Life Coach School Podcast* (May 2016).

**TALKS & VIDEOS:**

- [The 10 Essentials of Influence and Persuasion: The Power of Generosity](#). Martin, S. *LinkedIn Learning* (May 2021).
- [How To Be Happy Every Day: It Will Change The World](#). Way, J. *TedXStanleyPark* (April 2017).
- [Be Unreasonably Generous](#). Lohse-Busch, E. *TedXStLouis* (March 2022).

**ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS:**

- [Harvard Study of Adult Development](#)
- [Berkeley Greater Good Science Center](#)