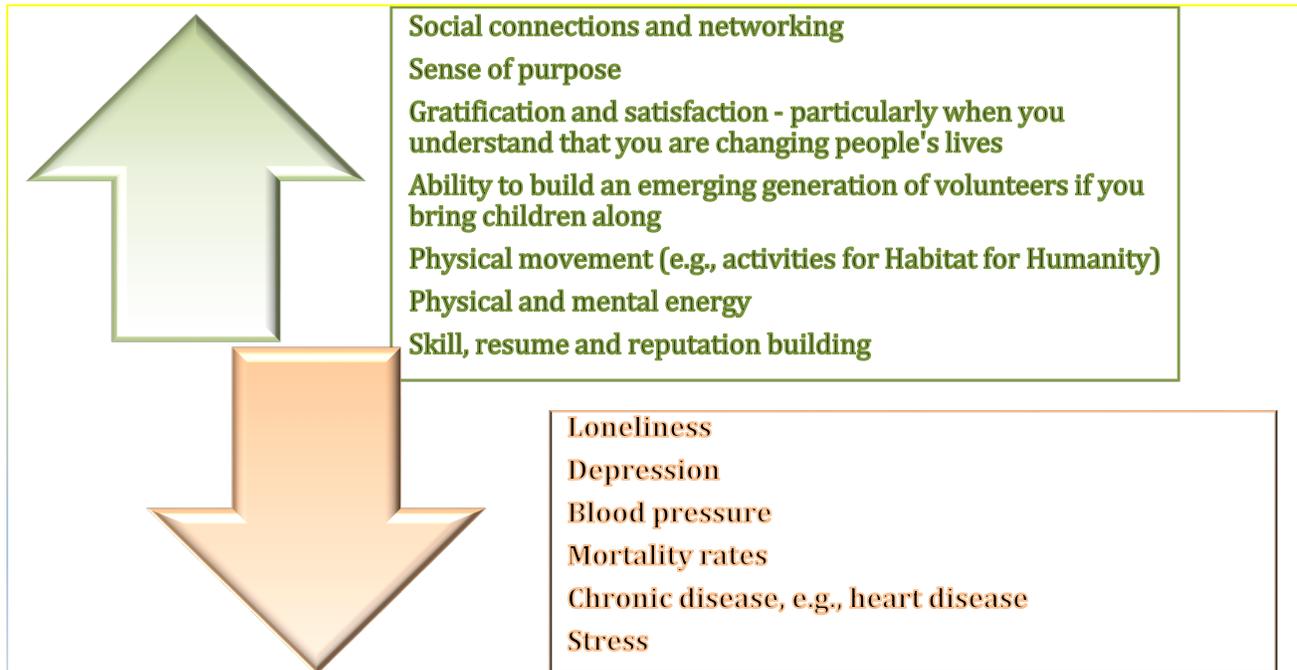


EXECUTIVE VITALITY™: BE A VOLUNTEER

Benefits of Volunteering - With increased volunteering:



Volunteer. I know – you are thinking that you and your senior leader peers are almost incomprehensibly busy. However, we also all know down deep that some activities “we just don’t have time for” pay much greater returns than the effort invested into them. The dividends paid by giving of one’s time freely to volunteer work include more energy, vitality, extra satisfaction in life, generally and in our work, a sense of purpose, higher motivation level, more energy, and happiness. Is there evidence of this? Yes, there is. A research review done by the Corporation for National and Community Service, Office of Research and Policy Development, [The Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research](#), Washington, DC, 2007, cites studies that show decreases in chronic disease and mortality rates, and increases in mental and physical health. These benefits get stronger as we age.

Even for younger executives, no matter what age, the networking opportunities, skills, and resume and reputation benefits are bonuses to the health and wellbeing benefits already noted.

Your own company probably has an infrastructure for volunteering. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is more than a buzzword; it is good business. There has been an increasing trend for investors, customers, and employees to seek out companies that are socially responsible. See [Business Advantages of Corporate Social Responsibility Practice](#), a review of studies of the benefits of CSR.

I asked one of my colleagues, an exemplary leader who has significant senior corporate experience along with significant experience in leading, creating and serving on the boards of various non-profits, what he

saw as the benefits of volunteering. Here is what he added: “Two things come to mind – with respect to satisfaction, the enormous burst that you get when you realize that you are actually changing people's lives. Second, if you have kids, there are statistics that demonstrate that, with taking your kids volunteering, there is a good chance of those emerging young people becoming volunteers themselves, and you have given them a great gift by introducing them to the possibility of changing lives.”

Here are some other examples of places you can look for volunteer activities: SCORE (mission: “Foster vibrant small business communities through mentoring and education”), your local school, Habitat for Humanity, faith-based organizations, hospitals, homes for the elderly, arts organizations for children or adults, museums, thrift stores and soup kitchens, health organizations, American Cancer Society, women’s shelters, homeless shelters, literacy organizations, reading to the blind... this is a partial list, of course. It is not hard to find opportunities.

Volunteermatch.org connects volunteers with opportunities in their cities. It says right on their website “Find a cause that lights you up.”

Do feel that you have a need to “give back? What are issues or needs that really matter to you where you can make a difference?