



the supplement
FACILITATING VITALITY

FEBRUARY 2019 A HELPER'S HIGH

Several years ago, I had the opportunity to go on a week-long service trip to re-roof homes in rural areas of Kentucky. Having never worked on a roof, I was excited to try my hand at a new skill while helping those in need. Since the organization was on a limited budget, our crew was taught the old-school method of roofing using nail and hammer. That meant it would be longer and harder work to get the job done.

After a week of roofing in the glaring sun – ripping off old shingles, repairing corroded boards, and laying new shingles – I was left exhausted yet inspired by the work we did. Hearing how thankful the homeowners were for their new roofs and having had the opportunity to build community with my crew members both restored my faith in humanity and inspired me to want to volunteer more. By the end of the week, I couldn't help but feel good about myself and the work my team had put in – all of the long, hard work was worth it.

“WHEN WE HELP OTHERS... OUR BRAIN
RELEASES FEEL-GOOD ENDORPHINS THAT WORK
TO PRODUCE THIS 'HELPER'S HIGH.'”

If you've ever volunteered, I'm sure you've experienced similar feelings – what psychologists refer to as the “helper's high.” When we help others - whether it's donating to a family in need, tutoring a struggling student, preparing a warm-cooked meal for a friend, or volunteering at a local organization - our brain releases feel-good endorphins that work to produce this “helper's high.”

When reflecting on my life, I've realized that my most growing experiences have been in service positions, and while I have embraced many opportunities to serve, I also can't deny that I have been hesitant about many of them – sometimes even saying no. In fact, when given the opportunity to repair roofs a second time a few years later, I spent a long time on the fence before I said yes. Despite having such a great first experience, remembering how long and tiresome it was held me back.

While volunteering significantly benefits those who are being helped, many people don't realize that volunteering has tremendous benefits for the helper too. UnitedHealth Group conducted a national survey of 3,351 adults and the mental and physical benefits of their volunteer experience. Seventy six percent of people who volunteered in the last 12 months stated that volunteering made them feel healthier, 94% said it improved their mood, 78% said it lowered their stress levels, and 96% stated it enriched their sense of purpose in life.

In addition to the health benefits of volunteering studied among these adults, volunteering has also been proven to improve social and relationship skills, reduce loneliness, improve





the supplement

FACILITATING VITALITY

self-esteem, combat depression, promote better aging, and increase overall happiness and wellbeing. Despite all of the positives to volunteering, only one out in four Americans actually does – could it be the hesitancy holding you back?

.....

From now on, I want to make a better effort to seek out volunteer opportunities or to say yes when an opportunity arises, and I encourage you to do the same. The ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle once said that the essence of life was “to serve others and to do good.” Based on the benefits of volunteering, the “helper’s high” might be another clue to better health and happiness.

If you are looking for a volunteer opportunity, check out Volunteer Match. The website, <https://www.volunteermatch.org>, connects volunteers with needs based on your interests and location.



MACKENZIE PENNINGTON,
Wellness Intern

Meet Mackenzie Pennington, our guest author this month. Mackenzie recently graduated from Western Kentucky University with a degree in health science and has spent the summer as our wellness intern.



PATRICIA M. FULLER, PhD,
Director, Wellness Engineering

Patricia M. Fuller has dedicated the last 20 years to designing and delivering wellness programs. Her events earn consistently excellent ratings for her holistic approach and her real world application.

Prior to concentrating in wellness, Pat taught accounting and auditing as an adjunct professor at the University of Tampa. She earned her CPA designation in 1992 as a senior associate for Coopers & Lybrand. She has a Masters in Business Administration from the University of Utah.

Pat has a PhD in holistic nutrition. In 2010, she was board certified by the Holistic Nutrition Credentialing Board. Her areas of research include stress management and eating habits. She is a Certified Wellcoach and a member of the Institute of Coaching. She is an annual attendee to The Harvard Medical School Conference, Coaching In Leadership & Healthcare.

pfuller@bks-partners.com | **Have a Question? Email it to Dr. Pat!**



This newsletter is for informational purposes only and is not intended as medical advice. For further information, please consult a medical professional.