

10 Little Ways to Become More Generous by Joshua Becker

“You have not lived until you have done something for someone who can never repay you.” — John Bunyan

There are very few people who don't like the idea of generosity. We are a species that loves to help others and confront needs when we see them. Unfortunately, there are also very few people who are content with the level of generosity in their lives. Most people I know wish they were able to give more. And while there are a number of reasons that this may be the case, sometimes the best solution may be the simplest. To that end, there are a number of simple steps that we can take to make generosity more intentional in our lives. If you have never given away any money or time, this would be a great way to get started (no matter what your current economic situation is). On the other hand, if you are just hoping to raise the level of generosity in your life, you will find some of these simple steps to be relevant and helpful.

1. Consider the benefits of generosity. Generous people report being happier, healthier, and more satisfied with life than those who don't give. Generosity produces within us a sense that we are capable of making a difference in the world, that we are actively addressing the needs of those around us, and that we are shaping our community into a healthier one. While generosity is typically seen as the opposite of self-serving, counting the personal benefits is indeed one of the most important steps that we can take in getting started.
2. Embrace gratitude. Make a list of the things in your life for which you are grateful. Your list doesn't have to be long. It won't take much time. Heck, it doesn't even have to be a physical list (in your head will be completely sufficient). Sometimes, the most important step you can take to become more generous is to spend more time thinking about what you already possess and less time thinking about what you don't. Once you start intentionally thinking that way, you may be surprised just how good you already have it . . . and become more apt to share your life with others.
3. Start really small. If you've never given away money, start by giving away \$1. If you are embarrassed to give just \$1, don't be. You've got nothing to worry about: There are plenty of charities online that allow you to give with your credit card and you'll never cross paths with the people who record your \$1 donation. Of course, the point of this exercise is not to report a \$1 tax deduction on your year-end tax return. The point is to get started. If you feel more comfortable giving \$5, \$10, or \$20, start there. But no matter what dollar amount

you choose, jump right in with something small. You can afford it, and that little push can help build momentum in your life towards generosity.

4. Give first. When you receive your next paycheck, make your first expense an act of giving. Often times, we wait to see how much we have left over before we determine how much we can give away. The problem is that most of the time after we start spending, there is nothing left over. The habit of spending all of it is too deeply ingrained in our lives. To counteract that cycle, give first. Every payday, write a check for \$10 to your local homeless shelter. You just may be surprised how you won't even miss it.

5. Divert one specific expense. For a set period of time (try 29 days), divert one specific expense to a charity of your choosing. You may choose to bring a lunch to work, ride your bike to work once/week, or give up Starbucks on Mondays. Calculate the money you'll save and then redirect it to a specific charity or cause. Whatever you choose, I recommend picking something that would be fun to give up—something unique that you'll remember and setting a specific period of time for the experiment should make it completely achievable.

6. Fund a cause based on your passions. There are countless charities/causes that need your support. And some of them are directly in line with your most compelling passions. What are you most passionate about? Is it the environment, poverty, or religion? Maybe it's world peace, child nutrition, or animal rights? Identify what passions already move you, find a committed organization around that cause, and then joyfully help them in their work.

7. Find a person you believe in. If you find that you are more easily motivated and shaped by the people in your life rather than organizations/causes, use that tendency as motivation instead. Take careful notice of the people in your life that you most admire. What organizations/causes do they hold most dear? Who do they support? What makes them passionate about supporting it? And how can you get involved alongside them?

8. Spend time with people in need. One of the most effective antidotes for non-generosity is to make space in your life for those who actually need your help. After all, it is a very small step to go from knowing somebody in need to helping somebody in need. One of the easiest ways to accomplish this is to volunteer one meal at your local homeless shelter. Most homeless shelters readily accept volunteers and have systems in place to get you started. And rubbing shoulders with the poor just may change your impression of them forever.

9. Spend time with a generous person. One of the most life-changing conversations I've ever had about generosity occurred when I found the courage to start asking specific questions of the right person. I remember starting with, "Have you always been generous?" And immediately followed with more: "When did you become so generous? How did it start? How do you decide where your money goes? What advice would you give someone who wants to get started?" It was life-changing. And the other guy paid for the meal . . . go figure.

10. Live a more minimalist life. Intentionally decide to own less. Living a minimalist life won't automatically make you a more generous person, but it will provide the space necessary to make it possible. You'll have more time/energy to help others. And the intentionality that emerges in your life will help you discover the need for generosity. Minimalism has resulted in many positive changes in my life—becoming more generous has been one of the most important. Generosity rarely happens by chance. Instead, it is an intentional decision that we make in our lives. But it does not need to be as difficult as many people think. Sometimes, starting with simple steps is the best step that we can take.