

# Are you still waiting for that 10-times more you're supposed to GET out of GIVING?

By Martin Kettelhut PhD

At the same time as we have seen an astounding proliferation of SELF-help books, tapes, talks, and workshops over the last 15 years, the coaching industry, empowering OTHERS, has come into its own as well. Many people I coach, from all walks of life, say that among their highest values is helping others. They see it as an important part of what their life is about: making a difference for others, contributing the people around them. It's certainly one of the most popular *raison d'être* a coach. This piece is about satisfying this desire. Why is it you're not getting complete satisfaction (but instead feeling overwhelmed, tired, irritated) out of doing those good deeds for others?

Three ironies about helping yourself and others:

- I. The only way to make sure you take care of yourself is to make sure you've taken care of others; and, you can only make sure you've take care of others after you've taken care of yourself.
- II. You can only help if there's nothing wrong with them.
- III. There is no reason to help others, outside your self.

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- I. The only way to make sure you take care of yourself is to make sure you've taken care of others; and, you can only make sure you've take care of others after you've taken care of yourself.

## Dieing to contribute

Every day I talk to people who just want to make a positive difference for others, but who are up against something in themselves to produce what they want. Whatever you do for others, you just keep producing more of the very same lack/unfilled need you yourself

have, and this creates suffering all around and for you. Say, for instance, you don't pack yourself the food you need to have during the day; you wind up not eating right and your energy level is off, your concentration is shot, you're not at your sharpest. All of this affects—negatively—the very people you set out to help: by taking that job, volunteering for that accountability, having those children. 'Yes, but, I didn't want to be late, so I didn't have time this morning,' There are nothing but reasons you cannot follow through on your commitments. In this case, go to bed earlier, get up earlier; do whatever you need to take care of yourself first. Otherwise, you will fall down at the very intention (namely, to be there for others) you claim has you not eating right.

Rare is the exception to the rule that it is only in the form of pride or a complaint that anyone ever told you how s/he made sure everyone else was taken care of before s/he got her/himself taken care of, before s/he got her/his own stuff handled, or before s/he got her/his own affairs in order. There is no aliveness in it. The poignant part—if you're truly interested in helping others—is that you will never meet anyone who is alive enough to tell about how someone else saved her/him before ever saving her/himself. Neither such party lives to tell about it.

### Contributing to death

Ultimately, the only way to truly, profoundly get your needs met is by putting something other than yourself at stake. You won't bother if it's just about you. Human beings don't bother if it's not to leave some positive vibration in the world for others to feel, whether in the form of a conversation shared, a financial legacy, an œuvre, a relationship. If it were just for my sake, I'd putter around the house all day and snack. It wasn't for you, but for family and friends, God and country, that you even got out of bed this morning.

The irony lies in the fact that it's when, having acknowledged and fed your humanity, when you're no longer concerned about you, that you can really do good by others and get the juiciest fruit of life: to have made a difference.

This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being a force of nature instead of a feverish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and as long as I can live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can.

I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no 'brief candle' to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations. (*Man and Superman*, G.B. Shaw)

Most of us will read this quotation of George Bernard Shaw and say, 'Sacrificing oneself for a mighty cause is surely a good thing,' and yet we won't give up any of our hard-earned time, money, or effort. Yet, by definition, sacrifice is not effective if it's not for something you consider higher, more valuable than yourself? 'Sacrifice,' Ayn Rand points out,

is the surrender of a greater value for the sake of a lesser one or of a non-value. Thus, altruism gauges a man's virtue by the degree to which he surrenders, renounces or betrays his values (since help to a stranger or an enemy is regarded as more virtuous, less 'selfish,' than help to those one loves). The rational principle of conduct is the exact opposite: always act in accordance with the hierarchy of your values, and never sacrifice a greater value to a lesser...

The proper method of judging when or whether one should help another person is by reference to one's own rational self-interest and one's own hierarchy of values: the time, money or effort one gives or the risk one takes should be proportionate to the value of the person in relation to one's own happiness. (*The Virtue of Selfishness*, Ayn Rand)

The apparent irony is resolved into a hierarchy of needs: to take care of oneself first.

Everything else is to be judged as it relates to one's own happiness. Only inside that

commitment does it come up (indeed as top priority) whether to help someone, or how, namely, in such a way as serves your values, the ones you consider greater than your personal needs. In short, true giving is an expression of love.

Practice noticing where you're not effective with others as an indication of where your needs are not being met. Get those needs met, and see the difference this makes. Say, for example, no matter how much you do for others, your community (-ies), the planet, you can't stay in the black yourself. You might need discipline of mind, a lesson in accounting, or plain old en-courage-ment. I was ineffectively being nice in my role as coach for a company back in the mid'90s, until someone said to me, 'Doc [That's what they called me.], given who you are for us, no matter what you say, it'll be taken as valuable contribution.' Once this was said, and I had got my need for respect and appreciation met, I became effective as company coach.

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II. You can only help if there's nothing wrong with them.

*That is perfect. This is perfect. Perfect comes from perfect. Take perfect from perfect, the remainder is perfect.*

*May peace and peace and peace be everywhere.*

*(The Upanishads, translated by W.B Yeats and Shree Purohit Swami)*

If there's anything wrong with them, then helping is fixing or changing. Human beings' bodies can be fixed or changed sometimes, but not human beings' human being, not their essence. You'd do well to think of human nature as perfect just the way it is. After all, it ain't changing.

And, for heavens sake, don't get stuck on thinking of yourself as anything other than perfect for not thinking of human nature as perfect just the way it is.

What's perfect about your thinking of human nature as anything other than perfect? By noticing you're thinking human nature is anything other than perfect you afford yourself an opportunity to see a limitation you impose on the world, to see it for what it is, a limitation, and thereby expand your being, take back some freedom and power.

Any opportunity to give of yourself, to serve, is training ground for seeing the limitations you impose on the world for what they are (the limitations), it's an opportunity to know yourself better, to expand your being. Any suffering you might experience while serving tells you more about your intolerance, what you can't be with, than it does about the world, which is perfect just the way it is. Out in the world, there's no suffering, and no imperfection. Suffering is only in your head. Again, noticing that you're suffering is the perfect opportunity to free your mind.

It's easy to tell if you're really helping, or ultimately hindering, another's growth by imposing limiting concepts. Start with the body. Do you encourage each other's treating the body in a healthy way? Or does being around you actually wear on the other's immune system? Do you tolerate each other's bad health habits, or do you actually exercise, eat right and rest soundly? What about the mind? Do you confound their thinking, or clarify it? Do your minds dance and sing together, or do you confine them in mental boxes? And the spirit? Are people around you inspired, or do you and others spend your life filling obligations, wishing things were otherwise, complaining? If there's unhealthiness of body, mind or spirit where you mean to help, look and see what perfection you're delusionally making wrong (whether by putting up with it, trying to transmute it, or hiding it). Only when you let that go are you of any real help. Only

when you truly treat whomever you're helping as perfection, as God, are you really of service.

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III. There is no reason outside your self to help others.

Giving of yourself in order to...anything: look good, win points, or friends, get praise or rewards, even just be a better person...is all about you, and in so far ineffective. Watch how insidious these in-order-to's can be. The die-hard egoist will attempt to help all those around her/him in order to raise her/his own level of being. Unfortunately, until you've really effectively raised the level of others' being, you'll never get what you want. Notice all the reasons the ego won't just take the lead and go to the next level before the others, and notice how these reasons just go to show how dependent we are on others: you might look bad to them, they might abandon you, you may be alienated by them. Jesus, the Buddha, Mohammed...none of these folks made sure everyone else united with God before they did. They did however leave us instructions how to do so. The point is, their lives were not about themselves; they were about leaving those instructions for us, i.e. about our well-being. Raising everyone else's well-being in order to raise your own can't work. Since your attention is ultimately on you, you cannot effectively raise anyone else's well-being. So you fail to achieve the purpose (to raise your own level of being by raising theirs).

Likewise, the die-hard do-gooder does everything s/he does in the way of taking care of her/himself in order to help others. This can work out, as long as you've really, truly taken care of yourself. Take the case of a friend, though, who encourages you to take this program, read this book, learn this technique: "It's THE answer!" If the friend appears

woefully in need (of the very things s/he claims to have gotten out of this program, book or technique), we will not find ourselves rushing off for the same experience. Our friend's purpose (helping us) is defeated, regardless of the quality of the program, book or technique s/he's recommending. For, there appears to be some other reason s/he is touting the program, book or technique, some reason other than that it was effective for her/him. No one's interested in whatever s/he's offering, due to this discrepancy. Because we're not interested, we can't get the benefit of the potentially helpful program, book or technique.

OK, OK, where is this all going? If you're not happy giving of yourself, your time, your money, your effort, stop a moment and consider this: Giving of yourself in order to...anything...wouldn't be an issue if there were a) nothing of yourself you feared giving up, and b) no others to give to. Consider a), yourself, first. It's only a matter of giving up that there's anything to help or fix about you or others. 'People will think I'm nutty and that I'm trying to fix them, if I invite them to do coaching' a friend says to me. 'Stop trying to fix your own nuttiness about clarity and wholeness,' I told him, 'you've got nothing to fear losing but your humanity here...nothing to gain but godliness.' Same applies to the volunteer work you do; as long as you're trying to right the world (in which nothing's off but your perception of god's plan), you will produce suffering for yourself and those you're 'helping.' Your suffering is because you can't fix the world: even if it were really off, there's no end to it, and you are mortal. Their suffering is because you literally make them wrong or in-need-of-fixing. It will take practice, you may need a coach, but start living from a place of wholeness and completeness: you lack nothing.

Being whole, complete, lacking nothing includes not needing to help or fix anything then. That ‘need,’ those perceptions, are yours anyway. Regarding b), then, once you see that you are whole and complete, lacking nothing—regardless whether there really is an Other to whom to give (After all, we ARE ONE.)—the APPEARANCE of an Other reminds us to give—not (in-order-) to anything (external) —just to give, and give fully, to life. Let it not be in-order-to anything. Give for no reason. In so far as you give to an in-order-to, you frustrate your true purpose: give yourself fully to life.

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