

Seven Benefits of the Social Cause Diet

BY GAIL PERRY JOHNSTON

1. Improved health

Fascinating research reveals that people who volunteer just one to two hours a week have “lower mortality rates, greater functional ability, and lower rates of depression” than those who do not volunteer, and that volunteering “leads to improved physical and mental health.”¹

2. A higher purpose

The Social Cause Diet is about breaking the boundaries of our own existence and discovering we are valuable to others. Philosophers, theologians and sociologists all agree that true health and well-being is achieved when we get out of ourselves and experience a purpose that is greater.

3. Stress relief

When we serve, we tend to live in the moment. Before us is a house to build, a team to coach, or a trail to clear. Whatever it is, there’s a job to do or a cause to support. We get into it and put ourself and our worries aside. This is healthy. This is stress-relieving. This is the Social Cause Diet.

4. Richer relationships

When we volunteer, we make significant, nourishing connections with others. The stories gathered for *The Social Cause Diet* are as varied as they come, yet they all involve relationships that have been formed or deepened through acts of service.

5. Unique opportunities

In addition to going to new places and meeting new people, volunteering provides unique opportunities to use strengths and talents we might never have a chance to use elsewhere. A simple personality test in *The Social Cause Diet* has been designed to reveal our individual strengths and interests so we can pursue a line of service where we will truly thrive.

6. Healing of deep hurts

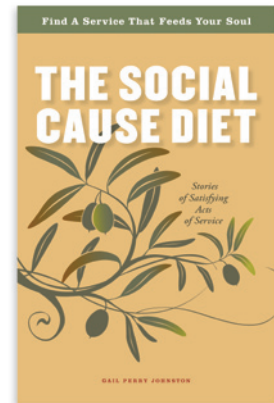
People often serve in the very area where they have been deeply hurt. They find healing when they discover that something good can come from their suffering. Michael Whitman lost a son to suicide. Years later, he teaches other parents about suicide prevention and experiences one of the most profound benefits of Social Cause Diet: relief from our own pain.

7. Knowing you make a difference

It goes without saying that volunteers make the world a better place. Cities with high volunteer rates have lower crime, higher employment, and better education.² But there’s more. When we know we are making a difference, we are blessed with a sense of purpose and greater life-satisfaction. Those who volunteer actually live longer—possibly because they simply have a good reason to stay alive.

1. “The Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research” can be found on www.nationalservice.org.

2. “Volunteering in America: 2007 City Trends and Rankings” can be found on www.nationalservice.org.



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Our country doesn't need another program for losing weight, but we could use a plan for losing a little of ourselves!



Gail Perry Johnston is an art director and author. Her books speak to the most profound times of our lives. Her new release, *The Social Cause Diet*, is a collection of stories and resources to inspire us all to find a service that feeds the soul.