

THE HUFFINGTON POST

THE INTERNET NEWSPAPER: NEWS BLOGS VIDEO COMMUNITY

Posted: May 18, 2009 6:43 PM



[Ken Dychtwald Ph.D.](#)

Renowned Psychologist, Gerontologist and Author

[What Have You Got to Give? How to Add Action to Hope](#)

Everyone wants a piece of the pie.
Who gets a cut? Who does the serving?

I think the days of "he who dies with the most toys, wins" are over. Perhaps we were all hoping for more -- a little more money left over after the bills are paid, a cushion, an earlier retirement, a larger nest egg -- a bit more peace of mind. Now it's time to add action to hope, pick ourselves up and get on with the game. And, while we're "rebooting," maybe it's time to share some pieces of the pie: let's help others who are less fortunate.

We know how to make change

The good news is that we're not new to personal and social challenges. In our youth, we struggled with some of the most vexing problems a society can confront: racism, discrimination, sexism, and war. Now, we are facing perhaps our greatest trials. From rebellious and self-indulgent kids, we have matured as a generation. We are learning from our experiences as parents, adult children, workers and bosses, and more than any other time in our lives, we have accumulated wisdom that we can pass on.

There are lots of ways for us to support our society and help see each other through the current challenges. Michelle Obama has served people at Miriam's Kitchen, a soup line for the homeless just seven blocks from the White House, and last week spoke to the Corporation for National and Community Service, sharing the reasons she left her job in a law firm for a career in public service. Rachael Ray, Hugh Jackman, and Nathan Lane have signed on for Bette Midler's Spring Picnic Auction to fund park restoration in New York. Sir Tom Hunter of Scotland takes his resources and trains and teaches people how to be self-sufficient and successful on their own. In Rwanda, the Hunter Foundation has created prosperous coffee farmers, people who can now support themselves.

Ways to share (and you won't have lost anything!)

Opportunities to contribute abound. I have provided a helpful listing of local and national

volunteer and philanthropy resources and ways to get going in my new book [*With Purpose: Going from Success to Significance in Work and Life*](#). There are lots of ways to give -- and the choices are becoming more customizable. First, you can give *money* or *things*. Any amount will help your local church, synagogue or mosque, your favorite PBS station, your Girl Scout troop, the community hospital or homeless shelter -- the list is endless. Or maybe you've got an old TV set or computer lying in the garage, or clothes you don't any longer wear or books that are getting dusty in the attic. Someone or some organization could really use these things. And remember, relative to income, America's largest contributors to charity are not the rich, but everyday hard-working men and women like yourself.

Just as important, you can share *skills*. A nursing assistant in Alaska working toward her R.N. license revels in being able to provide additional at-home assistance for five clients whom she helps with daily activities including grocery shopping and exercise. Maybe you'd enjoy helping out with the summer sports programs at your neighborhood Y or elementary school. You can mentor young or re-careering workers on how to be more effective in their jobs. Instead of sitting in your apartment and worrying, stay busy helping youngsters in summer school with math problems, reading, and spelling. They'll benefit from your attention and you'll be delighted with how you feel along the way.

You can also contribute your *wisdom*. For example, after the breakup of a stormy marriage, one woman found her calling as a volunteer teacher for the Peace Corps in the impoverished country of Mali in West Africa. At the state teachers college in the capital city, she teaches debate, black American history, and the philosophy of Emerson and Thoreau to French-speaking African students. A 61-year-old lawyer living in Washington, D.C., longed to devote more time to pro bono cases, so he cut a deal with his firm allowing him to spend 40 percent of his time defending the indigent, and focuses most of his pro bono work on death-row cases, which he finds both morally rewarding and intellectually challenging.

Summer of Service

You've heard of volunteer vacations. Take one and become a vacateer! The Internet is a ready resource of stateside and global opportunities. Each year, well over 100,000 Volunteer-in-Parks (VIPS) contribute to our [National Parks Service](#) by assisting at visitor centers, serving as tour guides, helping to clear invasive species of plants from the site, and much more. Or, you may choose to keep your summer service simple, by becoming a literacy volunteer at your local library or contacting your Chamber of Commerce or Town Hall to beautify a small area in your town that could use a facelift by planting perennials that will bloom year after year. If you'd like to make some new friends and see parts of the world that you've only heard about, take an [I-to-I](#) trip to South Africa to feed baby lions, or you can join a [Global Volunteers](#) trip to Peru to work with abandoned children -- or you may even enjoy participating in a [Charles Darwin Research Foundation](#) trip to the Galapagos to count giant tortoises.

You have so much to give. Don't hoard it! And remember, you can give away every skill you have and every lesson you've learned -- and you won't have lost anything! You'll gain... I guarantee it. And, while you are serving others, you'll be adding to your own humanity, your own "peace" of the pie. Your service will serve you well, too.

To hear Ken Dychtwald speaking about the new era of "giving back," click here for ["How will you use your life?"](#)

You can access a [free copy of the first chapter](#) of Ken's new book, [With Purpose](#).

Ken Dychtwald, Ph.D. is a psychologist, gerontologist and author of sixteen books on aging, life transitions, and retirement-related issues including [Age Wave](#), [The Power Years](#), and his new book, [With Purpose: Going from Success to Significance in Work and Life](#) (with Daniel J. Kadlec, Collins Life; 3/09). The founding CEO of [Age Wave](#), he lives with his wife and children in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Original posting and comments can be found at:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ken-dychtwald/what-have-you-got-to-give_b_204876.html