

## NURTURE OTHERS

Reaching out to others nurtures our own self worth. Helping others makes us feel good. We grow to believe other people care about us, which is excellent comfort when we are depressed. Nurturing others also teaches us humility and gratitude. Through caring for those in need, be they friends or strangers, we can touch the ultimate goodness of the world by touching the goodness in ourselves.

But remember, this is not an opportunity to burn yourself out. This is not an endorsement to put everyone else's needs in front of your own, to over-commit to a volunteer program or to get sucked into a needy friend's problems. Please take care of yourself first, even in the act of taking care of others.

### ***When To Do It:***

- When you need a break from your own problems.
- When you need to feel needed and part of the larger picture of life.
- When you are feeling depressed, overwhelmed and discouraged about the state of the world.

### ***What To Do:***

- **Close By**

If big, organized volunteer work overwhelms or scares you, keep it simple. Countless opportunities exist for nurturing the people around you. Learn the names of your neighbours. Visit an elderly person on your block. Acknowledge a homeless person when you pass by them. Open the door for a stranger. Pick up trash on your street. Donate something to a charity – it doesn't have to be much, every bit helps.

- **Help People You Know**



Tuck an uplifting note in your child(ren)'s lunch box. Compliment your partner. Give half of your casserole to a neighbour. Write a letter to a lonely family member. Give your friend a rest by taking their child(ren) to the park. Clip a pertinent article to give to your co-worker the next day. Information and resources are excellent gifts. Habitually share the name of that great, inexpensive restaurant you discovered or the wonderful book you read. Surprise someone you care about with a little something they want: renting a movie they want to see, giving them a small gift certificate, baking their favourite muffins.

- **Gift of Comfort**

A delightful, personal way to reach out to someone in need is to deliver a bag, basket or box filled with comforting goodies. The surprise of a gift during hard times can be invaluable. Tailor the bag to the recipient's current needs. Some ideas for the contents: chocolate, an inspirational book, scented soap or lotion, a small reminder to laugh (perhaps a miniature troll or wind-up toy), magazines, a bottle of essential oil (try rose or lavender), a long-stemmed rose, fresh coffee beans, a snapshot from a happy day that you shared, an appreciation letter (listing all of their qualities that you cherish and respect) ... the choices are endless.

- **Volunteer To Learn**

Make a double whammy of loving yourself by helping others while cultivating your mind or exploring a new interest. Answer phones for a small art gallery. Be an usher for a symphony series. Explore being an apprentice, on weekends or nights, to an artist or crafts person



you admire. Volunteer at your public television or radio station during a pledge drive. Train to be a volunteer for a crisis hotline. Share your career expertise at a local school. Run a workshop in your local community centre to teach others a skill that you have.

- **Volunteer To Change**

Concerned about the environment, the political climate, women's rights? The quickest way to feel better is to pound the bed and scream. Slower but more lasting peace comes from action. Decide on one problem that angers / depresses you the most or that feels closest to your experience (e.g. women's issues, minority rights, local environmental concerns). Decide how much time you can commit, then research courses of action or brainstorm with friends to decide what to do. Don't overwhelm yourself. The quickest way to feel worse is to take on too much too soon. Follow your inner voice and be careful not to play the martyr.

Adapted from: *The Woman's Comfort Book: A Self-Nurturing Guide For Restoring Balance In Your Life* (Jennifer Louden, 1992).

## Volunteer To Change



1. What issues or problems do I see around me that concern me (e.g. kids being bullied at school)?
2. How would I like things to be (e.g. kids treating each other with respect & schools taking bullying seriously)?
3. What would make it difficult for me to do something about this issue (e.g. time)?
4. What can I give to this issue (e.g. knowledge/experience)?
5. What are the different ways I could work on this issue (e.g. discuss with other parents about bullying, talk to my child's school about bullying, write letter to newspaper)? Don't censor yourself!
6. Is there anything I need to do or find out before I do something (e.g. find out what, if any, services/resources exist)?
7. What could I commit to doing now (e.g. talk to my kids and their friends about bullying, learn more about bullying)?
8. What could I do in the future (e.g. speak to parent committee at school, approach school about holding a bullying awareness day)?
9. What is the least I can do (e.g. listen to and be there for a child that tells me they are being bullied)?