

# LifeMap<sup>SM</sup>



"LifeMap is a navigational tool to help you on your path towards personal and professional success. Our belief is that you can achieve a more rewarding career, a more productive organization and a more enjoyable and abundant life."

April 7, 2009

## This Week's Message:

**Doing Good - Feeling  
Better.**

**Paths Forward**

**• Need Career  
Coaching?**

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## Doing Good - Feeling Better.

Scientists have long debated whether or not altruistic behavior in humans is mostly contingent on the specific situation or due primarily to one's personality and personal

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characteristics. Much like the "nature or nurture" debate, the answer seems to be "both".

To bolster the situational case, researchers have shown that you're more likely to come to somebody's aid if you know them, if you see the other person as somehow similar to you, if you live in a small town or if no one else is around to hear a cry for help. On the other hand people who are in a good state of mind, who have little need for the approval of others or who feel in control of the events in their life seem to be more prone to altruistic behavior than others without regard to the specific situation.

I don't doubt the research illuminating either of these positions - and not just because one paper I read reviewed 50 scientific studies funded by the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine. When we are attuned to our better angels we discover that benevolence, compassion, generosity and altruism are integral elements of the human experience regardless of whether the impetus is generated by our upbringing or the conditions in which we find ourselves.

Must our altruistic behaviors always be totally unselfish? I cannot vouch for the truth of the following story but I enjoyed finding it enough to share it with you regardless. Thomas Hobbes was a 17th century English political philosopher, scholar and author who believed that we typically act out of self-interest. On one occasion it is said he was observed handing out money to a beggar in the street. When questioned on his behavior he replied that he was primarily trying to relieve his distress at seeing the beggar's plight. So is altruism just a response to guilt or the result of an active conscience? I think not and now a host of medical studies has given us the reason why. The answer is that helping others feels good and aids us both psychologically and physically.

Let's take a further look at this discovery.

### Paths Forward

· **The Helper's High.** Helping others makes you feel better and there are tons of studies to prove it. For example, in one study of over 3,000 Americans involved in volunteer work, subjects reported feelings of exhilaration, a burst of energy (similar to the endorphin release following intense exercise) followed by a restful period of calmness and

serenity. 90% of this group also indicated that volunteering helped relieve stress, reduced chronic pain and induced restful sleep. More studies like this are being published every week showing that volunteers experience better psychological and physical health (e.g. reduced cholesterol, blood pressure, and stomach acid) and live longer as well.

• **The "Mother Teresa Effect"**. If you'd like to boost your immune system consider this. Saliva tests have been shown to reveal hormonal or biochemical imbalances underlying chronic conditions such as diabetes, stress, fatigue, obesity and others. Researchers at Harvard University showed 132 subjects a movie about Mother Teresa's charitable work among the poorest of Calcutta, India's poor. Afterwards they tested the subjects' saliva and found markedly increased levels of Immunoglobulin A which is our body's first line of defense against the common cold virus. If the "Helper's High" is so strong that just witnessing somebody else doing volunteer work can benefit our health imagine what getting involved yourself can do!

• **What Moves You?** When you see a story on TV or read a magazine article or hear about a fund-raiser what is the cause that most easily grabs your attention? Is it a disease that claimed a family member, kids needing foster homes, a blood drive, Toys for Tots, Meals on Wheels, is it youth sports or scholarships for the needy, is it disaster relief, is it a no-kill animal shelter or clean drinking water in the third world, is it caring for a local playground or a beach or is it just visiting a lonely elder or veteran now in the hospital? If any issue - and I mean *any* one - ever flips that little switch in your heart there is a group dedicated to it that needs and wants your help. Use the Internet, the phone book or, ask your friends with common interests to find the right one for you. Don't pick something because you *should*, pick something because you *want to*, pick something that you *will enjoy*.

• **Deciding To Act.** Good intentions are fine; action is better. What might help you to act on your good intentions is to remember that volunteer work not only benefits others, it benefits you - in attitude, in energy, in contacts, it expands your horizons, it improves your outlook, and it even benefits your physical health. This is one case where you can save your own life. If you need to do a little more reading on this topic to get motivated go to [www.drpaulpowers.com](http://www.drpaulpowers.com), click on LifeMap Archive, and open:

• 3/4/08, *Living A Connected Life*.

or

· 7/11/06, *Stop Bowling Alone*.

· **Time Is Always An Issue.** We all have multiple demands on our time. But maybe you've heard the saying that if you really need something done give it to a busy person. Busy people tend to be efficient, organized and productive. If you can incorporate volunteering into your existing time commitments you will become more efficient, organized and productive. If you have family demands see about groups addressing children's needs or elder care. If you already belong to a church or temple see how they might use your skills. If your career is in flux see about involvement in a job networking group. Be creative; involve your spouse, or other family members, a co-worker, a friend or a neighbor.

**LifeMap** is about harnessing your best intentions, your strongest interests, and your favorite talents and using them to benefit the society you live in and yourself as well.

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#### ***Stalled at work? Still struggling to find your true vocation?***

Or know someone who is? To order your copy of *"Love Your Job! Loving the Job You Have, Finding a Job You Love"* by Dr. Paul Powers, click the link below.

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**Sincerely,**

Dr. Paul

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