



Transcript

Five Daily Helpers

Why there are Two Types of Giving and How One of them Doesn't Work

Lesson #5

Giving



Jim Lucas

Jim: Hi and welcome sadly to the 5th and final lesson of 5 Daily Helpers – the course that gives you simple ways to get the most out of life by taking 5 simple actions – today is lesson #5 Giving

Mother Theresa said “It's not how much we give but how much love we put into giving.”

And, what I take from this is that we can give in two different ways. We can mindlessly give a lot, always running around doing lots for other people, working hard for people, giving your all, spending money on them, buying them gifts or donating to charity. And then, we can give in a way that involves more warmth, gentleness....more compassion.

This second way of giving seems more beneficial to me. Because it invites me and you to really think about what we give and how we do it. It asks you to make a choice rather than to react. It guides you to tune in to what other people need and what you need. Maybe the message is that we give more effectively when we give in these ways....ways that are more mindful.

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The Foresight Report's findings – the report I mentioned back in lessons 1 and 2 – the report where this research comes from – talks about the neuroscience of giving. It talks about how when we do stuff that is about getting along, co-operating, sharing and helping, we experience brain activity that stimulates good parts of the brain i.e. parts that contribute to positive wellbeing. They talk about how social co-operation is intrinsically rewarding.

Just to give you a definition of thiswhat is social co-operation? Lets think about what the opposite is....when you don't co-operate socially, you get into conflicts. You row and have arguments. You act aggressively or you neglect your own wants and needs. You withdraw or people please. So thinking about whether you've been involved in these situations...how have you felt when you've been on the receiving end of someone's aggression? Not great. You feel hurt, upset or angry yourself. It can be really disturbing...you dwell on what was said and worry about what might happen next time you see them. You might want revenge, to get back at them. When we don't get on, we suffer. It undermines our wellbeing.

Social cooperation is like I said, all about interacting effectively. Some basic ideas might be:

- Showing respect and consideration
- Listening to what others have to say
- Sympathising with other's distress
- Showing empathy to provide emotional support
- Offering guidance when it is needed
- Acting patiently and with sensitivity

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Each of these things are a gift. They are things you can do for someone else. And when you do it can amazingly positive results. Other people feel good when they are around you. People feel more attracted to you. Situations become more enjoyable and you feel calmer and more connected to people. It's like you create a positive feedback loop for yourself and other people.

You act kindly and compassionately towards them and they act similarly in return. Together you create more harmony.

More recently, we've seen research into the effects of compassionate behaviour. The work of Paul Gilbert and Kristian Neff shows us that people learn to overcome problems with shame when they learn compassionate skills.

I just want to revisit when I said at the beginning at this point. I started off this lesson by talking about how there are two kinds of giving. That you can give mindlessly – like when you run yourself ragged. And, it seems that this kind of giving isn't too great for your wellbeing.

Let me say something about why. It seems that when you give compulsively and infinitely, you are missing out on some important aspects.

1. You don't slow enough to notice the experience of giving – e.g. how that really impacts the person and how that impacts you. Take being a parent for example. A parent has many tasks in raising a child – one is to nurture them and take care of them, to be available, reliable and loving. And another is to help them to teach them how to do things for themselves, to let them learn so that they can function independently and autonomously.

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These are two of our basic human needs. Now, if you are doing the first, but not the second, then you aren't letting that child grow as they need to. As a result, they'll get frustrated and maybe they'll blame you for stuff. You can then end up feeling more resentful as in your mind you do everything for them. Which of course, you'd be right in thinking. Which is what we are saying here is the problem.

So in giving all without slowing down, you might miss out on the realisation that the better gift is to do less for them, but to teach them or let them learn independently. A child may complain and moan that they want you to do it for them, but the act of a loving parent is to show them they can.

2. Another thing you are missing out on is empathy. Empathy is when you put yourself in someone's else's shoes. It's when you try to tune into what it is like for them. It isn't giving advice, lecturing or dismissing them. It's not about reassuring them and telling them not to worry. Empathy is about providing emotional support. It requires to you to be open to pain, hurt, sadness and fear. Only when you are ready, willing and able to do this are you truly empathising.

So when you empathise, you engage more much with a person and you learn much more about what they need and want. This then as you've guessed it, means that you'll be able to give in a way that means so much more to that person. You'll be able to give them something that they really need or want.

3. And the third thing I think you miss out on is awareness of your own needs. When you give endlessly to others and neglect yourself, you suffer. There's a reason when you get on a plane and they take you through the flight safety instructions that when they get to the part about oxygen masks, they tell you to put yours on before you put it on your child or a very elderly relative. You need to take care of yourself first. You need to give to yourself sufficiently so that you are in a position to give to others.

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Some people in the helping professions talk of empathy fatigue. They've given so much that they are tired out, exhausted. They just need a break, to look after themselves for a bit.

This is a challenge for all of us. Giving to others can be easier than giving to ourselves. It seems natural to many of us to encourage people, to show kindness and to give praise. Even just thanking someone for the work they've done. But, when it comes to ourselves, we often overlook this. Do you praise yourself for what you contribute at work each day? Do you act with kindness when you make a mistake? Or do you tell yourself off, get frustrated, feel bad, ruminate on it?

Whilst its natural to do this – you've been socially engineered to give to others rather than yourself – it doesn't work to improve your wellbeing. When you act with love and kindness towards others, parts of their brain get activated. They feel soothed and secure. They feel connected to you, like you care and understand. These same parts of your brain get activated when you act with love and kindness towards you.

The benefits of giving are omnidirectional. Everyone benefits if you give mindfully, with compassion for you and those around you.

Acts of giving can be simple. It can be asking someone how they are. It can be saying hello to people. Asking them to have lunch together. It can be finding out when their birthday is and sending them a card. It can be thanking someone for all they do. It can be giving someone some of your time and attention.

And, if you struggle to give compassionately to yourself, then think about how you can treat yourself a little more kindly.



So – that brings us to the end of this course. These 5 daily helpers are things to focus on now and going forwards. Identify which you do well and often enough and see which ones you work on improving. Make a plan to do something in that area. Just something small you can do today or tomorrow. Whether that's connecting, being more active, slowing down to take notice, learning something new or by giving – it's about getting a balance between these 5 actions. You can also use this as a guide to check in within yourself as time goes by. If you catch yourself feeling run-down, stuck in a rut or struggling, check-in to see whether you've neglected one or some of the 5 daily helpers. They'll act as a guide for you to get back on track.

I'd love to hear from you. Let me know which lessons you've found most useful and which areas you've been working on. I'd also like to know about more about what you get stuck with. Because this will help me develop the next stages of what I can offer you. I want for you to be able to take another course that will help you overcome where you get stuck. So, your experiences and feedback is really valuable to me.

To let me know, please complete the contact forms at the bottom of this page. You can access this course as long as you like. It's here, just log back in. Listen to the lessons again. As long as you stay a member and stay subscribed.

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So, that's it. Thanks once again and remember to send me your questions. Bye for now.



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