

VOLUNTEERING AS A WAY TO FIND THE MEANING OF LIFE AND WILLINGNESS

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 Analysis

A man's search for the meaning of life is an ongoing process since their creation. Every human being wishes to discover the meaning and reason of life. They do this in order to find important values, to stand by those values and transfer their energy to the values as an innate desire for human beings.

However, when individuals fail in their search, some inner unrest and discomfort would begin, serious emptiness would also occur where it would lead to the decrease of their energy and spirit. Therefore discovering the meaning of life is a vital process; and family, occupation, love, social support and belief systems play a serious role in this process. At this juncture, volunteerism is found to be a salvation of the soul. Putting one's heart and soul into helping others, being engaged with voluntary works, giving support to others have their importance in life.

What is Willingness?

"Willingness is the tendency for using human's time, energy, information, abilities, sources and saving for the sake of others without expect any advantages and on voluntary."¹ There are two important points when it comes to willingness, namely free will and altruism. Free will is the basic principle of willingness while altruism is using information, abilities and time for the sake of others, in other words to make an effort, care and to have an interest in other people without expecting any profit and have a shifting tendency from egocentric to empathetic attitude.

The values of willingness and altruism benefit not only those who are helped and taken care of, but also for those who are doing the favor. It creates a sense of usefulness, it builds activities on individuals, and as a bonus, and the physical and psychological health of those who help would increase. Victor E. Frankl



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actually recommends volunteering for patients who suffer from depression and the results were positive. He would direct his patients to offer help in youth foundations, libraries and other volunteering activities that are available. He found that these clients showed the symptoms of recovery and their depression level also decreased significantly. The technique is believed to be particularly beneficial for young patients in order to eliminate their sense of purposelessness; and to move away from substance abuse and risk of suicide.²

Unfortunately, volunteerism does not receive the attention that it deserves and the participation level of volunteering has shown a decrease in Turkey. A recent study shows that Turkey ranks 132nd from 135 countries in the volunteering participation rate.³ This could happen due to the lack of the transfer of information and the decreasing sense of altruism. In order to bring back the sense of altruism and to boost the participation of volunteer in Turkey, activities that promote the sense of willingness should be conducted massively in the form of formal social projects by NGOs.

The Benefit of Volunteering

When an individual wish to provide benefits to others without expecting any income or even anything in return, the country, the society and each volunteer would actually gain many valuable benefits. Some of them are as follow:

- Easing the burden of the country though the support of volunteerism.
- Promoting the spirit of guarding the society in case of any emerging problem and finding the solution to each problem.
- Increasing the moral, motivation and life energy of volunteers.
- Providing quality and active life.

- Helping volunteers establish new relations and networks through volunteering communities.
- Intensifying the feelings of belonging to one certain group and help strengthening the volunteers themselves and the people that they help.
- Helping volunteers to think that they are not alone.
- Enhancing volunteers' communication skill.
- Enabling volunteers to work better as teamwork.
- Enhancing the sense of self-esteem in volunteers by allowing them to discover their own power and the ability to face challenges in the projects that they do.
- Building empathy and sensitivity of volunteers.
- Helping volunteers to become more active, helpful useful ad healthy people.
- Helping volunteers to be able to heal any of the psychological problems that they might have.

Some Example Volunteer Projects

- Book donation project for captive women.
- Home care services for the elderly people (foster child project).
- Children visitation projects for the protection of children.
- Cataract project to help African people who are have the most cataract patients worldwide.
- Water well project.
- Pre-loved clothing donation projects.

Volunteers could join these projects, make financial donation, become a volunteer, put an effort, do the work and use the spare time in worthwhile activities.

Result

Volunteers would achieve this sense of satisfaction and self worth in their lives in the more and more materialistic world.

If this process can be managed correctly, the volunteers, the society and even the country would receive mutual gains. Therefore the country might benefit from having these projects below:

- Expand volunteering activities
- Provision of the education of willingness
- Increase the amount of social responsibility projects
- Give financial support for these projects.

Without doubt, through these projects and activities volunteers will see the changes in their souls as well in the society, and with time and the number of volunteer will increase from day to day hence making their lives more meaningful.

Endnotes

¹ “What is volunteerism?”, *Answers*, <http://www.answers.com/topic/volunteerism>

² Viktor E. Frankl, “İnsanın Anlam Arayışı”, *Okuyanlar*,

İstanbul, Temmuz 2018, ss. 153.

³ “Türkiye Gönüllülükte 132. Sırada”, *İLKE*, <https://ilke.org.tr/turkiye-gonullulukte-132.-sirada>