



# The Giving Way to Happiness: Stories and Science Behind the Life-Changing Power of Giving

*By Jenny Santi*

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**A guide to how giving can be the key to happiness—combining the latest research with firsthand accounts from Goldie Hawn, Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus, and others.**

As a Philanthropy advisor, Jenny Santi has met some of the world's most notable and inspiring change-makers. Despite their diverse backgrounds, each of these people has related to Santi that the thing in their life that has given them the most joy is the simple act of giving. In this inspiring book, Santi shares their stories – how they found purpose, healed from past wounds, and discovered meaning beyond material success – as well as her own personal struggles in finding happiness in order to inspire readers to discover the power of giving in their own lives.

Told firsthand by such notable people as Academy Award winner Goldie Hawn, Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus, Teach for America founder Wendy Kopp, philanthropist Richard Rockefeller, environmentalist Philippe Cousteau, and many others, the stories in this book make an eloquent and passionate case that oftentimes the answers to the problems that haunt us, and the key to the happiness that eludes us, lie in helping others.

In this book you will discover:

- How altruism activates the same pleasure centers of the brain stimulated by food, sex, and drugs
- Practical, universally applicable lessons on what kind of giving makes people happy and what doesn't.
- How to give your time, talents, and treasures in ways that are more impact-oriented, energizing, and rewarding than ever

In this inspiring book, Santi reveals giving is the secret to living a life that is full of meaning, purpose, and happiness.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

*"The Giving Way to Happiness* is full of interesting insights from big-ticket philanthropists and prominent personalities, but it is also about something bigger: how we can all find happiness through helping others. If done right, giving may well be the greatest gift you can give yourself."

—**Adam Grant, professor, The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, and *New York Times*-bestselling author of *Give and Take***

"This thoughtful look at philanthropy honestly examines the self-interest often involved in it and suggests that a self-focused approach to giving may in fact be entirely appropriate."

—***Publishers Weekly***

"Well done! A wonderful and timely contribution."

—**Christy Turlington Burns, founder of Every Mother Counts**

*"The Giving Way to Happiness* will change the way you approach giving, shifting the focus from charity to empathy, from a one-way transfer to a mutually beneficial act, from guilt and obligation to pleasure and happiness. Jenny Santi, through her well-researched, eloquent, and insightful book, teaches us how we can help ourselves by helping others."

?—**Carl Liederman, former CEO of One Young World, and founder & CEO of Liedership**

"Does humanity really need another book about happiness? If it's this one, yes. Jenny Santi brings unique access to some of the world's highest profile givers. By getting into their heads, she gives us moving glimpses into their hearts. And into hers—a new generation MBA who seeks justice and joy. These pages pop with hope for both."

—**Irshad Manji, founder of NYU's Moral Courage Project, and *New York Times*-bestselling author of *The Trouble with Islam Today***

"Jenny Santi's book delivers an important message: Giving can make as much of a difference in your own life as it does in others'. It's a new way of thinking and a compelling case for giving that can help cultivate purpose for individuals and change for communities. Her stories of how inspiring people such as Ted Turner and Muhammad Yunus made the decision to give at scale also show you don't have to be a billionaire or world leader to make a difference."

—**Kathy Calvin, CEO, United Nations Foundation**

"As Jenny Santi so eloquently shows, to give is not just better than to receive; to give *is* to receive. The people in this book are from all walks of life—a dolphin captor who comes to regret his work, the grieving mother of a 9/11 victim, a Bangladeshi economist doubtful that what he's teaching really matters, an entrepreneur struggling with ALS, and many others—but they share a passion for giving that changes them in profound ways. Their stories are a testament to the fact that when we give of ourselves, we not only improve the lives of others, but we find genuine happiness and deeper meaning in our own."

—**Brandt Goldstein, visiting associate professor at New York Law School and author of *Storming the Court***

"Given the growing inequity on our planet, what is the solution? Santi shows us that a culture of giving can

change the world around us while fulfilling each of our lives at the deepest level. Impressive, inspiring, and full of wisdom!"

—**Shiv Khemka, Vice Chairman, SUN Group**

"Jenny Santi has succeeded in crafting a compelling blend of moving stories, powerful insights, and practical advice on how each of us can find *'The Giving Way to Happiness.'* This book demonstrates that each of us can feel the impact and spiritual rewards of giving if we choose to make the journey. Her efforts and personal experiences will be an inspiration to many."

—**Alex Charlton, president of Cavendish Global**

"This is an inspirational book, which addresses both philosophical and practical questions. Santi's perceptive account is uplifting and insightful. The book is packed with heart-warming stories, fascinating research, personal revelations, useful tips, and timely advice. *The Giving Way to Happiness* explores the very real connection between helping others and helping ourselves."

—**Ilian Mihov, Dean, INSEAD**

"With expertise, passion, and captivating real-life stories that keep you at the edge of your seat, Jenny Santi reminds us of the life-changing power of giving—it is essential to our well-being as individuals, families, and communities. *The Giving Way to Happiness* is an important book for people of every generation who want to be fully alive in the world."

—**Tara Stiles, founder and CEO of Strala Yoga**

"There is now compelling evidence from neuroscience that giving tends to make people happy. Jenny Santi has added to this science the evidence of a fascinating collection of people, some well known, some not, who have experienced life changing happiness through dedication to philanthropy. Santi has written a book that is insightful and entertaining and sure to inspire readers to try some of that recipe for happiness themselves."

—**Matthew Bishop, globalisation editor at *The Economist*, and coauthor of *Philanthrocapitalism***

"Authentic, candid, and insightful, *The Giving Way to Happiness* masterfully interweaves touching and often surprising stories into the analysis of how people live lives full of meaning, purpose and happiness. This is an important book that sends a wonderful message that is so simple at its core but that is unfortunately too often overlooked—that the act of giving creates a multiplier effect, adding something to the life of those in need but also intrinsically rewarding the giver too, making him or her happier as well. Altruistic or not—the effect is positive. Santi's book is filled with lessons you'll want to immediately start applying to your life. Read it to find out more."

—**Boris FJ Collardi, CEO of Julius Baer**

"An enlightening read, filled with open, honest glimpses into the lives of inspirational personalities from different walks of life. This is a rare book that will make you smile, move you to tears, inspire you to make a difference, and make you happy—while reading the same page. This book is a friendly, approachable yet sharply written narrative packed with ideas you'll want to immediately start applying to your life."

—**Malvinder Mohan Singh, executive chairman of Fortis Healthcare Ltd.**

"This book presents a groundbreaking new perspective on happiness. Through her exciting career as a philanthropy advisor to some of the world's most generous individuals, Jenny Santi offers us a view into the principles that have made them not only successful, but truly happy."

—**Jayesh Parekh, co-founder of Sony Entertainment Television and managing partner of Jungle Ventures**

"A wonderful book for a new generation of individuals who not only want to make a difference but also want

to live exciting, fulfilling, and happy lives. Packed with inspiring stories of people from different walks of life and with lessons directly applicable to your own. Just pick it up and you'll be hooked!"

—**Katherine Lorenz, President, Cynthia and George Mitchell Foundation**

"In a very readable and compelling way, Jenny Santi weaves together science and strategy that will inspire anyone who is looking to build more strategic purpose into philanthropy, gain insights into volunteering, or better understand their purpose. A must-read!"

—**John R Hart, vice chairman, New York Private Bank & Trust**

#### About the Author

**Jenny Santi** is a philanthropy advisor to some of the world's most generous philanthropists and celebrity activists. For five years, beginning when she was only twenty-eight, Santi was the head of Philanthropy Services (Southeast Asia) for the world's largest wealth manager. She holds an MBA from INSEAD, went to the Wharton School as an exchange student, and attended New York University's Heyman Center for Philanthropy and Fundraising, where she is a Chartered Advisor in Philanthropy.

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#### **PREFACE**

#### **The Most Satisfying Thing You'll Ever Do**

##### *Confessions on What Giving Does to the Giver*

Seven years ago, I stumbled into the unusual career of advising extraordinarily wealthy people on their charitable activities. Straight out of business school, I was hired by one of the world's largest private banks to be part of their team of in-house philanthropy advisors, and I relocated from New York City to Singapore. It was a dream job for many, including me. To this day, almost every day, I get random requests from people wanting to hear how I landed a position that they perceive to be about "telling rich people how to give away their money." (The job definitely had aspects of that, but as with any corporate job, it was not nearly as glamorous as people would imagine.)

My job exposed me to an extraordinary world where the clients I met were hundreds of times richer than Madonna. My clients had made enough money—hundreds of millions, even billions—to give in a significant way, often through a formal family foundation or a charitable trust. Week after week, I met with them privately, listening to the stories of what moved them to do what they do, probing deeply to understand their values and motivations so that I could guide them toward the most appropriate and natural course of action.

Reflecting on the stories my clients told me in those meetings over the years, I realize that most of these tales were yet unheard, except by me, because it was my job to listen to them. In those meetings set in skyscraper penthouses, five-star-hotel lobbies, and wood-paneled offices, my clients told me how their own acts of giving were transforming their lives and bringing them fulfillment in a way that was different from—and sometimes greater than—what they got from material wealth. I saw many of them cry, but only happy tears.

Through my work as a philanthropy advisor, I also had a chance to meet and speak privately with so many men and women from the social sector—social entrepreneurs, nonprofit professionals, young students, and volunteers from different walks of life. Not everyone had a lot of money to give away. Many were giving their time, their talents, and a big part of their lives to something that mattered deeply to them, and again I was struck by what I observed. Every time they spoke about their work—regardless of how grim the issues they were addressing, whether it was cancer, global warming, or domestic abuse—they beamed with purpose, and radiated with something that I can only call joy.

Yet outside those private settings, it seems that the world is all too hesitant to embrace the idea that by giving, we indeed receive. We are quick to pass judgment on companies that do good when they reap financial benefits in doing so; we label people as smug when they emerge from a volunteer trip brimming with smiles; we lambast founders of foundations named after themselves. Some generous givers, such as the multi-Grammy-winning singer Michael Bolton, whose namesake charity benefits abused women and children, tell me that they simply do not want to derive any joy from their charitable work. They say it is their duty, and that's it. Just as the philosopher Immanuel Kant considered acts motivated by sympathy as not praiseworthy (because they make the do-gooder feel better), it seems we have convinced ourselves that giving should be a sacrifice, an act of moral responsibility that renders itself null when we derive any joy from it. But why?

And so in public settings, the same people I meet talk about something else, something we have all heard before. In their speeches, media interviews, and public forums, they talk about their beneficiaries: the kids whose lives they have transformed for the better, the patients they have cured, the blind to whom they have given sight, the schools they have rebuilt from rubble.

These days, we are approaching a tipping point in terms of giving—or philanthropy, a word I try to avoid using because it sends images of Bill Gates writing billion-dollar checks to save the world, excluding the rest of us who can't afford to do the same. (In the same way, Christy Turlington Burns told me, “I want to be described as an advocate, an activist, or as a servant of other people, not as a ‘philanthropist,’ because to me, that word sort of creates a disparity between those who can give versus those who need to be given to; it doesn't feel comfortable to me and yet I know that's just a perception.”)

There is a growing body of media articles, books, programs, and conferences that focus on giving, philanthropy, fund-raising, social entrepreneurship, and impact investing. They provide insights on various aspects of doing effective giving, such as how to set up a formal foundation, how to succeed in fund-raising, how to measure the effectiveness of a project, and so forth. But almost nothing out there focuses on the origin of the philanthropic impulse: the heart.

I believe that givers start giving because they are moved by a cause, but they endure because giving brings them happiness and fulfillment. As Bill Clinton said, “When I was president, Make-A-Wish brought forty-seven young people to see me, either in the White House or during my visits to communities where the children lived. Those kids did a lot more for me than I did for them.” The work I have done with notable individuals, wealthy donors, and various people from different walks of life over the past seven years has given me a glimpse of this and taught me that there is much more to uncover about the transformative effects of giving upon the self.

Many mystics, historians, and religious figures have alluded to this in the past. Aristotle coined the concept of eudaimonia, a state in which an individual experiences happiness from the successful performance of his or her moral duties.

Winston Churchill said: “We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.”

Or in the simple, beautiful words of an old Chinese proverb: “If you want happiness for an hour, take a nap. If you want happiness for a day, go fishing. If you want happiness for a year, inherit a fortune. If you want happiness for a lifetime, help somebody.”

Modern science sheds new light on this phenomenon. More than twenty years ago, Allan Luks brought forward the concept of the “helper's high,” resulting from studies showing that groups who had helped



through time and/ or money experienced a “euphoria” similar to that of those who had completed a physical challenge such as a race. Other sources have proven that giving activates the same brain regions that are activated by cocaine use. I am not suggesting that drug use take the place of donations, but it seems that both activate the ventral striatum region, the pleasure part of the brain; furthermore, at least two of the nonprofit professionals I have met in the course of writing this book have described the thrill they get from their work as similar to getting high on a drug.

A 2008 study by Professor Elizabeth Dunn of the University of British Columbia found that spending money on others promotes happiness more than spending money on oneself. In an experiment, participants were given an envelope containing either five dollars or twenty dollars, which they were asked to spend by the end of the day. Participants who were instructed to spend the money on a gift for someone else or for a charitable donation reported greater happiness than those who were instructed to spend the money on themselves. The study concluded that policy interventions that encourage people to invest income in others rather than in themselves may be worthwhile in the service of translating increased national wealth into increased national happiness.

My own journey is an example. It was no accident that I chose a career in the philanthropy sector. Growing up in Manila, the Philippines, as I was chauffeured to an exclusive school every day, I would look out a car window upon which beggars knocked, asking for food and loose change. It was always in the back of my mind that I had to do something about it, although I did not know how. When I was in business school, I knew I would not be happy with myself if I chose to work in finance, traditional management consulting, or in a consumer goods company coming up with marketing strategies for soap. I craved to do something that made a difference, although I knew that I was not exactly the type of person who could happily move to Africa and live in a hut.

My twenties were some of the most difficult years in my life. I had a string of bad relationships, including one with a physically abusive man. My mom was diagnosed with cancer, and my parents’ thirty-year marriage collapsed and tore my family apart. But through all this, my career, first as a teacher and then as a philanthropy advisor, always kept me happy. As a teacher I woke up every day looking forward to being in the classroom, knowing that I was being of service to my students. When I became a philanthropy advisor, day after day I met with inspiring people working hard to make a difference, and their concern for something bigger than them made me realize that there is more to life than worrying about my own problems. I found strength in them and in their stories.

On one particularly miserable day, in the wake of the painful ending to an important relationship, I decided to do something good for the world instead of the usual day out with girlfriends for retail therapy and the blow-by-blow analysis of what the guy had done wrong. Being an animal lover, I volunteered for a day at Noah’s Ark Natural Animal Sanctuary, a haven for seven hundred dogs, three hundred cats, and dozens of reptiles, horses, rabbits, and other creatures who have been abandoned by their owners. What the animals got from me was a few morsels of food and perhaps some affection. But what I got from them was a deep sense of hope, meaning, and strength greater than I had thought possible. And one Christmas Eve, not too long ago in New York City, when I found myself with no set plans for the occasion, I volunteered to feed the homeless at a soup kitchen run by the Church of the Holy Apostles. I look back at that day as one of the most meaningful I’ve ever had. These experiences reminded me of the times when my mother would spend her birthday in an orphanage, in the company of children who, she said, brought her more joy than any present could.

Every day I see people trying to fill their time with something meaningful— What TV show to watch, what restaurant to indulge in, which mall to spend the whole day in. I see young people trying to find some

pastime to entertain them, and old people worried about what to do during their retirement. And yet countless people have, since the dawn of history, alluded to a completely different pathway to happiness, fulfillment, and meaning in life. There is something else out there. We hear throughout history, philosophy, and literature the same themes regarding giving, which you'll read about in the stories and science that fill the pages of this book:

Giving is the most satisfying thing you'll ever do.

It's the source of true happiness, the meaning of life, the source of the greatest emotional and psychological returns.

It's the best way to recover from the worst tragedies, even from the grief of losing a loved one.

It's a greater pleasure than the creation of wealth, the most direct route to happiness, which neither money nor career success can provide.

Giving is what liberates the soul. What brings families closer together. What combats the blues. What fills the gap. What provides a feeling of security. What provides a sense of empowerment and accomplishment. What can heal. What allows us to experience a deep connection with others. What gives inner peace. What brings great meaning, fulfillment, and happiness.

The answer lies in giving.

So why don't more of us give? Every day a charity appeal says, "If only we all gave a dollar . . . if only everyone just gave the time they could, it would help millions of people." But that doesn't work.

Why not? Perhaps it is because we have not heard enough stories of how happy it can make us—stories from people we admire; from people we dream of meeting; from people whose businesses we follow, whose songs we listen to, whose movies we watch. I have had the privilege of meeting many of these people through my work—some of them are celebrities, some are well recognized for the good they have done in the world, and some are incredibly wealthy and successful in business. I'd heard their stories of how giving their time, resources, and talents to the causes they care about has brought them happiness and fulfillment far greater than they had ever imagined. It occurred to me that these stories must be told, as they hold the power to inspire others to do the same.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Edward Payne:**

Reading a e-book can be one of a lot of task that everyone in the world loves. Do you like reading book and so. There are a lot of reasons why people like it. First reading a guide will give you a lot of new details. When you read a guide you will get new information since book is one of several ways to share the information or maybe their idea. Second, reading through a book will make you more imaginative. When you reading through a book especially tale fantasy book the author will bring that you imagine the story how the character types do it anything. Third, you can share your knowledge to others. When you read this The Giving Way to Happiness: Stories and Science Behind the Life-Changing Power of Giving, it is possible to tells your family, friends and also soon about yours book. Your knowledge can inspire different ones, make them reading a book.

**Theodore Huff:**

The reason? Because this *The Giving Way to Happiness: Stories and Science Behind the Life-Changing Power of Giving* is an unordinary book that the inside of the publication waiting for you to snap it but latter it will jolt you with the secret the idea inside. Reading this book alongside it was fantastic author who write the book in such awesome way makes the content inside easier to understand, entertaining means but still convey the meaning totally. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this anymore or you going to regret it. This amazing book will give you a lot of benefits than the other book have got such as help improving your proficiency and your critical thinking technique. So , still want to delay having that book? If I had been you I will go to the publication store hurriedly.

**Martina White:**

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