

TRY GIVING YOURSELF AWAY

Try

Giving Yourself

Away

by David Dunn

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TO EVERY MAN AND WOMAN

WHO IS SEEKING

GREATER H A P P I N E S S N O W

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A book for the times

C. Several years ago I wrote a brief article entitled
Try
Giving Yourself Away, which appeared anonymously in
FORBES MAGAZINE and was reprinted in even more con-
densed form in THE READER'S DIGEST. With the kind
permission of these publishers, and at the request of
many persons, I have expanded that short article into
the present book, which develops in considerable detail

the Art of Giving-Away. In it I have tried to answer many questions that have been put to me by personal friends, and by readers in letters from all over the globe.

These are troubled times. The world is full of strife and heartache. Men and women everywhere seek peace of mind and heart, and wish desperately that they as individuals could do something toward lifting the heavy blanket of gloom and fear that oppresses mankind.

Perhaps you and I can help. More than anything else, the world needs the healing influence of a great

surge of simple kindheartedness, to rid humanity of jealousy, selfishness and greed. Such a surge must start with us, as individuals; it is beyond the power of the world's rulers or statesmen. In our daily living we average citizens must establish the spirit and set the pattern of a kindlier world.

Could there be a more opportune time for all of us to try 'giving ourselves away? Could anything else we might do as individuals contribute so much toward the peace of the world, or earn us so much personal happiness? I doubt it.

I invite you to join me in my hobby.

DAVID DUNN

Chapter

I make an important discovery

^[Like most people, I was brought up to look upon life as a process of getting. The idea of "giving myself away" came to me by accident. One night, twenty-odd years ago, while lying awake in my berth on the Twentieth Century Limited en route from Chicago to New York, I fell to wondering just where the eastbound and westbound Centuries passed each other in the night. *

"That would make an interesting subject for one of the New York Central's advertisements," I said to myself "Where the Centuries Pass." Whereupon I went to sleep.

Next morning I wrote a letter to the New York Central Lines presenting the idea, "with no strings attached." A few days later I received a courteous letter of acknowledgment and the information that the Centuries were scheduled to pass near the little town of Athol Springs, New York, nine miles west of Buffalo.

Some months later I received a second letter informing me that my "Where the Centuries Pass" idea was to be used as the subject for the New York Central calendar for 1924. You may recall that calendar, a night picture of the oncoming locomotive of one Century and the lighted observation plat-

form of the other, passing on a curve. It was a scene rich in color and railroad romance.

The following summer I traveled extensively. In almost every railroad station and hotel lobby I entered, both at home and in Europe, hung my Century calendar. It never failed to give me a glow of pleasure.

It was thus I made the important discovery that anything which makes one glow with pleasure is beyond money calculation, for in this humdrum world where there is altogether too much grubbing and too little glowing.

I began to experiment with giving-away, and discovered it to be great fun! My life began to be full of exciting little adventures, and I found myself making many new friends.

I discovered, too, that successful giving-away has to be cultivated. There is a knack to it, just as there is to successful getting/ Opportunities for reaping dividends of happiness are fleeting. You have to act quickly or they elude you. But that only adds zest.

One day I woke up to the fact that I was really a collector a collector of Glows and After Glows. It is a fascinating hobby. Like collecting anything else', you are always looking for new experiences in giving-away to add to your collection. Unlike other forms of collecting, however, you need no

safe
or cabinet in which to keep your treasures; nor do you
have to
go out of your way to keep adding to your collection.
You
have only to look around, wherever you are, to discover
some
opportunity to give yourself away.

I recommend giving-away as an exciting and thoroughly
satisfying hobby. In fact, if you will give it a good
try, III
practically guarantee you a happier life starting right
away!

Chapter 2

Capsule adventures in giving

and living

^L Your giving-away will, of course, have to be done in
your
own individual way, based on the things you have to
give.

Fortunately each of us has a different assortment of
gifts,
so there could never be anything standardized about
giving-
away, even though every one of us were to take up the
hobby.
Some of us have spare time; others have surplus. mental
or
physical energy; others^have a special art, skill or
talent; still
others have ideas, imagination, the ability to
organize, the gift
of leadership.

All of us can give appreciation, kindness, interest, loyalty, understanding, encouragement, tolerance and a score of other little portions of ourselves. Each of us should "major" in the items in which we are "long," and fill in with the others.

Perhaps you will catch the idea faster if I explain how I practice my hobby.

Suppose I am passing a neighborhood store in which I notice a particularly attractive window display. I say to myself, "Someone put real thought into trimming that window, and he or she ought to know that at least one passerby appre-

ciates it."

So I stop in, ask for the manager, and compliment him on the display. I find it always pleases a merchant to know that his windows are noticed, even though I may not buy a penny's worth of the merchandise displayed in them. In one instance the clerk who trimmed the windows received a raise in pay as a result of my compliment.

If I particularly enjoy a book, a magazine article, or a play, I write a note to the author, telling him or her of my enjoy-

ment. Sometimes I receive an appreciative acknowledgment; more often I do not. It doesn't matter in the least; I am not collecting autographs; I am just keeping my giving-away machinery in good working order.

One Saturday afternoon while working in my garden I thought of an idea which I believed a certain New York department store might find useful. That evening I wrote a letter to the store outlining the idee and presenting it, as is my custom, "with no strings attached." It was adopted with appreciation and I had acquired a big department store as a friend.

If an idea comes to me that I think could be used by a local priest, minister, doctor, lawyer or merchant, I write him a note telling him about it, though he may be a stranger to me.

If in my reading I run across an article, a picture, a cartoon, a poem that I think would interest some friend, or even

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a casual acquaintance, I clip it out and send it to the person. Sometimes I send clippings to total strangers.

One spring evening I stopped at a popcorn wagon in Battle Creek, Michigan. A couple of urchins watched hungrily as the melted butter was being poured on the freshly popped corn. Without seeming to notice the youngsters, I ordered two more bags, paid for them, handed each of the boys his bag, and strode away. This little adventure-in-giving made the world more exciting for four people th'at evening for the popcorn vendor, too, enjoyed the episode.

The text of an advertisement in a trade magazine appealed to me as being a wonderfully fine piece of writing. I wrote a note to the company saying that, while I was not in the market for their service, I did want to compliment them oh their advertisement. Some days later I received a letter from Philadelphia from the man who had w/itten the advertisement. He said my note had encouraged him no end and given him fresh inspiration. I had acquired a new friend in Philadelphia. I have since had many fine letters from him.

One evening I was dining alone in a Boston hotel. The selections the orchestra was playing exactly suited my mood. On the way out, impulse prompted me to cross the dining-room to the dais where the musicians were resting

between
numbers.

"Gentlemen," I said, "I have thoroughly enjoyed your program. Several of your numbers were particular favorites of mine. And you put so much spirit into your playing. I want to thank you."

Their faces broke into smiles, and I left them beaming over their instruments. The rest of my own evening was happier.

One Sunday afternoon I fell to thinking of an elderly gentleman in failing health whom I had not seen for a long time.

"Why not surprise him by calling him up?" I asked myself.

"I was thinking of you and I wanted to have a little chat," I explained when he came to the phone. We had an enjoyable five-minute visit.

His wife told me, a few days later, that my call had done more for him than a whole bottle of his tonic. "You know," she explained, "the telephone almost never rings for him any

more."

Tiny episodes, all of these; but they are collectors' items in my hobby of giving myself away.

You may do such things yourself, quite naturally, without stopping to think of them as "gifts." If so, you are to be congratulated. But, judging from my own experience, I'll wager that you could do more of them, if you would make a real hobby of self-giving. And I'll promise that you'll be happier in proportion as you give.

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Only once in recent years have I violated my giving-away philosophy. In suggesting an idea to a shoe manufacturer I hinted that I would not be averse to receiving a pair of shoes in payment. He liked my idea and sent me a certificate good for any pair of shoes of his manufacture. I selected a smart pair of an expensive last and wore them proudly home.

But I lived to regret my avarice! That particular last was not suited to my foot, and it took my feet months to recover from the damage those shoes did. So now when I give away an idea there isn't even a shoestring attached!

Chapter 3

"A portion of thyself"

4 Ralph Waldo Emerson, that lofty idealist who nevertheless had a penetratingly practical knowledge of human nature, wrote, "Rings and jewels are not gifts, but apologies for gifts. The only gift is a portion of thyself."

Almost anything in the world can be bought for money except the warm impulses of the human heart. They have to be given. And they are priceless in their power to purchase happiness for two people, the recipient and the giver.

Many letters have come to me from people who want to try giving themselves away, but are timid. They are afraid that their simple gifts-of-the-heart would be laughed at. As one correspondent expressed it, "I have nothing of any importance to give to anyone."

This is not true. While you may not think of what you have to offer as being of any particular value, it may fill a need in someone's life. And if it does that, even for a fraction of a minute, it will add that much to the world's happiness. And happiness is one of the greatest gifts within the power of any of us to bestow, particularly in these troubled days when the world is full of fear and suspicion, and men's minds and hearts are anxious.

There are a hundred ways to give a portion of yourself. But they all start from the same spot your heart. The French have a proverb, "He gives nothing who does not give himself."

"A portion of thyself," will, therefore, be your stock in trade if you want to add to the happiness of those around you, and to lead a happier and more exciting life yourself. It is the spirit, not the substance, which carries warmth.

You need not worry for a second because you lack money or material things. You can give yourself extravagantly if you choose, and reap great happiness from your giving, without reaching for your pocketbook. As Longfellow phrased it, "Give what you have. To someone, it may be better than you dare to think."

Indeed, of all the things a person may give, money is probably the least permanent in the pleasure it produces, and the most likely to backfire on the giver. Too often it results in disillusionment, sometimes even in "wrecked friendship. If you must give money, bear in mind the wise saying of Miguel de Unamuno: "It is not the shilling I give you that counts, but

the warmth that it carries with it from my hand."

A New England man states: "It takes courage to give a small portion of yourself in lieu of some obviously valuable article. But a lively imagination made it possible for me to perceive a great many ways in which I might 'spend myself' instead of the cash I lacked."

I like the conception of "spending one's self," though I believe over the years one's spending turns out to be investing.

II

Some time ago I received a letter from a woman berating me bitterly for my article on giving-away. She said her husband was a "giver," that he had given away their money, their food, the children's clothes, and even household articles, until they were living almost in poverty.

I have no patience with such giving. When it comes to money and material things, I believe the needs of one's family should always come first. A person has no right to give away things which belong to others, even in the name of generosity. This book is about giving yourself.

You are trying to give pleasure to someone, and you know from experience what trifling things give you pleasure. Such simple gifts as a compliment on your home or your children

or your new hat, a note, a telephone call, or a simple act that reflects thoughtfulness or friendly interest, will set you up for an hour? perhaps for a whole day. They are the truest form of giving, because they come from the heart they are literally a portion of the giver.

Happiness must be sipped, not drained from life in great gulps. Nor does it flow in steady stream like water from a faucet.

"A portion of thyself" is a sip of happiness, as satisfying as it is costless.

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Chapter 4

Obey your warm-hearted impulses

4 The secret of successfully giving yourself away is not so much in calculated actions as in cultivating friendly, warm-hearted impulses. You have to train yourself to obey giving impulses on the instant before they get a chance to cool. When you give impulsively, something happens inside of you

that makes you glow, sometimes for hours.

Frequently impulse-giving results in a new friendship, or leads to an interesting adventure. One afternoon during the wartime gas shortage I was driving up a steep hill on my way home. On the sidewalk was a woman carrying two large bags of groceries. My impulse was to st[^]p and ask if she would like a ride. But it meant stopping on the hillside.

"She probably lives on one of the side streets a block or so up the hill," I told myself. But my giving-self squelched that argument and I pulled over to the curb.

"Can I give you a lift?" I asked.

The woman got in gratefully. She had been obliged to walk two miles to the village for her groceries, since the merchants delivered only twice a week, and company had descended on her unexpectedly. She was just starting the long trek home with her bundles.

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It turned out that he lived just around the corner from my own home, having moved there very recently. Thus, by obeying an impulse, I made the acquaintance of a delightful new neighbor.

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