

# groupassets



## The Power of Generosity

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Are you a generous person?		
Were you taught to be generous?		
Do you have a favorite human characteristic?		
There are many important human characteristics, such as:		
Integrity	Intelligence	Capacity for Empathy
Humor	Creativity	Conscientiousness
Kindness	Curiosity	Adaptability
Generosity of Spirit		Openness
Agreeableness		Stick-to-itiveness
Desire for Purpose		Honesty
Self-awareness		

My particular favorite is **generosity of spirit**. Think of the people whose company you most seek. (I do also love people who make me laugh, and integrity is critical.) But I’m fascinated with the research that shows that the more money someone earns, the less generous they become... Why is this? Is this research valid? What values might slip away? How does one learn generosity anyway?

I taught my kids that there were three uses for money: Spending, Saving, and Charity. Generally, I suspect that “talk is cheap” — and a parent’s modeling generosity is more influential. Tasked to think about the Group Foundation’s mission of raising money, I’ve been thinking about the topic of “charity” and being generous. I marvel at how easily so many people plop down up to \$8 for a coffee or tea daily and yet do not have any inclination to regularly donate to a worthy cause. How do we cultivate a willingness to do that?

When raised as a nice Methodist girl in a small Michigan town, the expectation was for me to put some money into the offering plate passed around each Sunday morning. It was always better to give than to receive. Converting to Judaism, I learned about tzedakah, understood as the moral obligation to give to charity. This is not limited to gifts of money, as sharing time, expertise, and kindness are also seen as forms of charity. There are even eight levels of charity, from the lowest level — “giving grudgingly, with a sour countenance” — to the highest level — “helping someone become self-sufficient so that the person is no longer dependent on the gift of others.”

In Islam, the Fifth Pillar of the religion is Zakat, a form of obligation where you must donate 2.5% of your yearly savings to others in need. It is proper to first give to family members, if they are poor. Otherwise, one gives to others who need help. This key component emphasizes the importance of social responsibility and wealth redistribution.

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Thinking existentially, giving to others, being generous, connects us to others and gives our lives more meaning.

Meanwhile, one of my lifelong goals is mastering Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics re anger: “Anyone can become angry — that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way — that is not easy.” Now I find that Aristotle also talks about generosity in a similar fashion, saying we should give “to the right people, in the right amounts, at the right time, with pleasure, and without looking out for oneself.” Both good “rules of thumb.”

Is generosity endangered in today’s world where so much is dominated by contract or economic exchange - both strictly conditional? I do think of Dr. Bruce Perry, in his book *Born to Love*, talking about his seeing a lessening of empathy among children. I certainly don’t think a steady diet of video games is increasing people’s capacity for empathy — and therefore for generosity.

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But there are ample positive signs of our capacity to do better — to be more generous — if you look beyond the daily headlines. There is a wonderful TED Talk on “Infectious Generosity” that I found to be very inspiring. In this TED Talk, Chris Anderson, the head of TED, talks about **cultivating a generosity mindset**. “Be brave, take a risk, give what you can, and be amazed at what happens next.” He states that it is not only with money that one can be generous. We can give our time, our attention, our hospitality, our access as well as show kindness in so many other ways. He thinks the world is “teeming” with stories of human kindness and creativity that are sparking more generosity across the world. “Whatever type of generosity we do, if we can be braver, it will go farther.” He is sick about how mean the world is, and he feels that people of good intent can turn this around. Anderson feels strongly that if you commit to

this journey of generosity, sooner or later two amazing companions will join you: meaning and happiness.

As a Group Foundation Board member, I am tasked to encourage people to be generous, especially with their money, to support our mission. Do we really believe in the healing power of groups to ask this? I think of the times that people have said to me, “Do people still do groups?” I think of how good group therapy training is often nonexistent — or hard to find — in various graduate school curriculums. I think of the huge number of therapists in my community (Washington, DC) and how few do groups! Here is one of the most effective treatment modalities — as well as one of the most cost-effective modalities — and there are clearly too few professionals trained to do this. We who believe so strongly in the power of groups need to do a better job of communicating this need for more trained group therapists and more groups as a therapeutic option for people in need. The Group Foundation helps! This past year we gave scholarships to over 200 students, new professionals, and agency staff to attend AGPA Connect and see firsthand the richness and effectiveness of a good group experience and learn how to provide healing experiences to their current and future group members. We support people working in our local communities responding to traumatic events. We give an annual Education Grant to AGPA to support in-person and e-learning group therapy training. (Check out all of the offerings on the AGPA website.) Currently there are online institutes, webinars, and journal-based trainings available throughout the year. I am proud to say we continue to have a strong Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion focus in our offerings, and the Foundation financially supports this. Also the Foundation has funded a Group Therapy Evidence-Based website that serves as an important resource for clinicians and others. We need to keep finding ways to strengthen the use of groups in our personal and professional communities. Contributing to the Group Foundation is a critical way to do this. Please seriously consider some kind of donation to our efforts. Any amount is greatly appreciated!

Martin Luther King, Jr., famously said, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” I would like to add that ideally it also bends toward kindness and generosity.

Please consider sending a donation to the Group Foundation to further our work — and help yourself feel better about yourself and our world, as well as support the role of groups in that effort! Here’s to being kind and generous!

2025 CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE GROUP FOUNDATION FOR ADVANCING MENTAL HEALTH  
GIFTS ACKNOWLEDGED HERE ARE FROM JANUARY 1, 2025 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2025

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- The Robert H. Klein Social Responsibility Award recognizes an AGPA member or group of members, an Affiliate Society, or an affiliated organization of mental health professionals who has provided an exceptional service that ultimately benefits the public-at-large (**deadline for nominations October 1, 2025**).
- The Humanitarian Award is presented to an esteemed individual whose ability and position, either personal, corporate, foundation and/ or politically based, has enabled them to do work reaching into and providing vitally needed services to a community (**deadline for nominations October 1, 2025**).
- The Foundation supports research that demonstrates the effectiveness of group psychotherapy and is soliciting proposals for original critical

- research reviews, either qualitative or quantitative (particularly meta-analyses), that focus on some selected area of group psychotherapy (**deadline for submissions is November 1, 2025**).
- The Alonso Award for Excellence in Psychodynamic Group Theory reasserts, in a concrete way, the value of original thinking about psychodynamic group theory. Individuals may qualify in a variety of ways. Suitable entries include doctoral dissertations, videos, published papers, and other creative research (**deadline for nominations December 1, 2025**).

Detailed award and grant descriptions, as well as listings of past recipients, are posted on AGPA’s website at [www.agpa.org](http://www.agpa.org). For additional information, contact Diane Feirman, CAE, Public Affairs Senior Director, at [dfeirman@agpa.org](mailto:dfeirman@agpa.org).

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