

The Power of Giving: How Giving Back Enriches Us All

by Azim Jamal and Harvey McKinnon

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What does it truly mean to give? This question grounded the work of *Power of Giving: How Giving Back Enriches Us All* by Azim Jamal and Harvey McKinnon. The book, written in a conversational style, examines people's motivations and actions. The goal is that readers "will come out of the conversation feeling better about ourselves and our world. Inspired to give more" (p. 3).

Jamal and McKinnon suggest, "Everyone has something to give, be it time, money, wisdom, love or a variety of other things" (p. 7). The authors string this thought throughout the book and tie the message into several other fundamental thoughts: Giving is a fundamental need resulting in many positive effects, often known as the "helper's high." A symbiotic relationship is formed between the recipient and the giver; this process of giving allows individuals to achieve their personal potential by maximizing the amount of excitement, energy, and pleasure that is experienced throughout their lives.

In their introduction, Jamal and McKinnon set the objectives for the reader upon completion of the book. They aim to:

- Share with you the importance and power of giving
- Highlight that even a small amount of regular giving can significantly improve your relationships, productivity, and happiness
- Emphasize that if everyone gave a little more, our world would be a more peaceful, healthier and happier place. (p. 13)

The idea of what it means to give and ways in which one may give is presented to the reader in a manner where one will need to master the key points in one chapter before being able to move onto the next chapter. The first chapter looks at why an individual should give. Chapter 2 explores what you can give. Chapter 3 examines to whom you should give. Chapter 4 questions how, when, where, and how much one should give. Chapter 5 inquires into what corporate giving means. The final chapter examines how giving to one's full potential sometimes means giving up things on a personal level.

Jamal and McKinnon's view on the power of giving can benefit faculty, staff, and new students who might participate in a new student reading program. It covers topics that are understandable to the 18-year-old, first-year student as well as to the 38-year-old transfer student. Professionals also will be able to relate to the topics that are presented through a wide range of stories and examples. The multiple subtopics and reflective exercises create opportunities for reflection within the classroom setting. For example, the authors challenge their readers to develop an awareness of their relationship with money through a self-reflective exercise. The exercise enables readers to discover their personal attitude towards this topic, regardless of age.

Each chapter contains thought-provoking questions and a summary of key points as well as discussion items that tie back to the idea of mastering one chapter before being able to move on to the next. Four major discussion points run through the novel:

- Living up to your own potential
- Creating balance
- Giving with emotional sensitivity
- Giving through corporate means

The first point of living up to your potential is presented by the authors as fundamental to building a strong foundation in giving. By living up to their potential, individuals tap into their talents and skills. This discovery will lead to achieving happiness and self-fulfillment. It will help students discover their true calling as they prepare to find a career for themselves.

The second key point encompasses balance and remembering to give to yourself. Jamal and McKinnon examine a variety of ways in which one can give, whether it is through giving love, laughter, or leadership. While the authors' goal is that readers will embrace the various types of ways to be involved in giving back, they point out the importance of creating a balance. If an individual over-extends himself or herself, the ability to give in the future is drastically reduced. When it comes to giving to yourself, the authors stress the importance of not only loving yourself, but also being open to receiving gifts as well. The ideas of listening to your inner voice, being mindful, and admitting to weaknesses are also addressed.

Exploring how to give is the third discussion point. Readers are exposed to the important elements of the emotional side of giving. When people give of themselves, the effect becomes powerful. Positive energy is shared with others, creating a more upbeat, kind, and loving energy. Giving of possessions often has a short-lived impact. However, when a person gives emotionally, these benefits are sustained. It is not just enough to give. One must give with respect, humility, and without conditions.

The final discussion point surrounds the concept of corporate giving. At first, readers may not think this chapter has any connection to them. However, many connections can be formed. Students are encouraged to look at products they buy and investigate how corporations give back to the community and the environment. Professionals are encouraged to take on an active role within corporations by voicing their opinions on the ways that profits are spent. This section also plants idea that corporate giving does not have to start at the top. There are things that can be done to give back regardless of what position an individual holds in the company.

This book offers unique perspectives on giving, including some not-so-common strategies to give. The authors look at giving in both tangible and non-tangible ways, confirming that the smallest act of giving has the possibility for a life-changing return. This was demonstrated when the authors explored the topic of giving in times of hardship. Readers have the potential to give of time, leadership, skills, and talent. These areas are just as powerful as financial giving: "Giving in hardship can also sometimes ease the hardship and produce unexpected results" (p. 131).

Jamal and McKinnon also address the topics of giving money and tithing 10 percent of one's annual income to church or charity. The authors provide encouragement and exercises to help individuals get to the core of emotional ties to money. The concept of want versus need is examined. What makes this process unique is that the authors recognize and acknowledge the importance of money. The concept of tithing is also explained in a unique manner. Usually,

tithing is considered only in the financial sense, but the authors discuss how one can tithe through his or her time and ideas and in an intrapersonal way.

This book can be incorporated into service learning initiatives in place for new student programming. It has the potential to inspire the creation of service learning projects for those institutions that do not have one in place, and to enhance projects already in existence. The book lends itself to the creation of many partnerships, both on and off campus. First-year students can partner with career centers to find volunteer opportunities at local businesses that will help build job skills and give students an opportunity to explore a potential career choice. Students have an opportunity to leave their mark on campus by developing a way to give back to other students. Finally, new students can partner with the volunteer or community outreach offices to find agencies in the community in need of volunteers. The benefits gained from giving back may lead to increased self-esteem and confidence for first-year students. Higher retention rates are another benefit derived from students giving back. Ultimately, through giving back, new students may have an opportunity to find their voice on the campus community, leading to finding where they “fit” on campus.

Overall, this book is a good match for new students and new student programs. Jamal and McKinnon wrote this book as though they were having a conversation with friends. It may give first-year students a good foundation for independent thinking. This group of students will have the opportunity to take a close look at themselves. Through this process, they will be able to determine their skills, talents, and values. New transfer students will have an opportunity to find a balance of giving and maintaining their other responsibilities. In addition, they will be able to discover what they need and what they want in order to be successful.

Faculty and staff may find it challenging to locate relatable topics that correspond with the corporate giving chapter as well as to family issues that are mentioned. This can be accomplished by relating corporate giving and family issues to either the higher education institution or student organizations.

Upon completion of this book, readers may have a better understanding of what it truly means to give. Jamal and McKinnon strive to make their readers take a step back and consider what one gives and how one gives. It will also help readers to realize all that one can give. This message will empower students as they develop skills and attributes throughout their collegiate career. In the end, students, faculty, and staff will realize that in today’s global community, “you can decide to help others and change lives, or you can decide to do nothing and lose the benefits of giving. But remember, when people come together to tackle a difficult situation, they receive far more than they can ever imagine” (p. 19).