

WFWP USA: The Fine Print of Altruism: 4 Points to Living for Others Sustainably

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If you've been around with us at WFWP, you've probably heard a lot about "true love" and "living for the sake of others."

For example, in her memoir, Mother Moon says, "True love moves on a circular path. Where it starts or ends, no one knows. Love within limits is not true love...The fallen world programs us to think that when we give something away, it is gone. In true love, however, the more we give, the more we receive. When our mindset changes from wishing to receive love, to wishing to give love, the world of peace will be at hand."

Actually, most, if not all religious and spiritual traditions emphasize the importance of giving of ourselves for the sake of others.

In the New Testament, 1 Corinthians 10:24 says, "No one should seek their own good, but the good of others." In Buddhism, Dhammapada 13:177 states, "Misers certainly do not go to the heavens...but noble men [and women] find joy in generosity, and this gives them joy in higher worlds." There is a Native American Sauk proverb that says, "Sharing and giving are the ways of God." There are certainly many more

While all of this may be true, it can give us the idea that we have to somehow superhumanly give and give and give to the point of depletion. That can leave us exhausted, overwhelmed, or even resentful. There are a few points I have found have helped me to give in a way that's self-sustaining and doesn't leave me feeling like I'm taken for granted.

1. I give because I'm amazing.

When hearing all these mandates to give to others, I think sometimes we can fill in between the lines that it's because "the other" deserves everything, and I deserve nothing. They are worthy, I am not. They need everything, I need nothing. But, no. I have amazing talents, skills, and passions that God gave to me. I have the cares and concerns God placed on my heart. I give because I have something awesome to offer to others.

2. Sometimes considering others means I must take care of myself.

It is the greatest benefit to others if I give out of my fullness rather than emptiness. If I continue to try to give and serve even when I am depleted, that can end up detracting from others. Sometimes I need to take a moment to refuel and recharge, not because I am putting myself above others, but because I want to give authentically and the best version of myself.

3. It's okay to say "no."

Saying "no" doesn't automatically mean that you are being self-centered. Living for the sake of others doesn't mean we become doormats. Don't fall into that trap. I love this quote from *The Gifts of Imperfection* by Brené Brown: "The heart of compassion is really acceptance. The better we are at accepting ourselves and others, the more compassionate we become. Well, it's difficult to accept people when they are hurting us or taking advantage of us or walking all over us. This research has taught me that if we really want to practice compassion, we have to start by setting boundaries and holding people accountable for their behavior." Compassion and healthy boundaries go hand-in-hand

4. Sometimes I do have to give when I don't feel like it.

Some would say that humanity's default mode is self-centered. Maybe, or maybe it's also more than that. The one person I know and have lived with most closely is myself. It's so easy to consider my own thoughts, feelings, and needs first because I know them, they are direct and accessible. Even more so when my own emotions are very strong, even overwhelming. It takes conscious effort to step outside of myself to consider what someone else might think or feel.

Life is so complex and beautiful there's no "user manual" to say for certain what situations should apply which "proverb" or spiritual teaching and where these caveats apply. All of this must be practiced with the wisdom that comes from learning from our mistakes.