



Beauty from the *inside out*

By Yolanda F. Johnson



By now, you've likely read about my own personal goal of "the philanthropic lifestyle." This means connecting the dots between the products and services we know, need, and love with those that support charitable endeavors and "good work." It is also the way we live our lives and how we give our resources and time.

According to studies cited in U.S. News and World Report, science has proven that when we do things to help others, it makes us feel better and is actually good for our health. But it only works when it is heartfelt and sincere. Otherwise, like anything else we don't really want to do, it becomes more of a burden. And, a recent article by researchers Sara Konrath and Femida Handy, both college professors, found that being nice and charitable actually makes you appear more attractive to others!

It has been said for ages that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder," and it looks like this is true. So, in the spirit of the philanthropic lifestyle, I wanted to present you with some ideas for inner beauty that flows to the outside.

Use your words, darling!

Have you ever noticed how good it feels to lift someone up and to be lifted up by others? This isn't about an ego trip, it's about affirming the positive. When is the last time you told your significant other how much you appreciate them? The same goes for your team if you manage employees at work, especially during the pandemic when human contact has been so rare.

A simple, "Great job" or "I appreciate your attention to detail" can go a long way for anyone who is right within your orbit. And who knows, it could very well be the extra boost they needed on a hard day. We never know what is happening in someone's life, so a little bit of encouragement and positivity can go a long way.

Andrew Newberg, MD and Mark Waldman, authors of "Words Can Change Your Brain," have noted that positive words "can alter the expression of genes, strengthening areas in our frontal lobes and promoting the brain's cognitive functioning." In contrast, their research explains that "a single negative word... releases dozens of stress-producing hormones and neurotransmitters, which in turn interrupts our brain's functioning."

Lead the way

Leadership comes in many forms, and often by just setting the right example. According to research, giving of your time to causes dear to your heart can significantly lower your blood pressure and stress level.

Have you ever wanted to serve on a board of directors or a gala committee? Do you have skills and talents that can help inspire others to action? Go for it. Think about your priorities and then take action. This could be with a local nonprofit organization or looking ahead to the reimagined post-COVID future, planning a spa day party with your nearest friends, in which you make care packages for those in need and use products from companies that give back to good causes. One of my personal favorites was a Pilates class I took, where the teacher gave a portion of registration fees to a local church's ministries—a win-win situation all around!

The beauty of generosity

A 2010 study found that people experienced happier moods when they gave more money away—"but only if they had a choice about how much to give." Your giving is a direct extension of who you are as an individual, and you should make the call on where and how you give to charity. When you're in control of this, it makes for a powerful impact, both for the recipient and for the giver.

In fact, the most recent Women Give report from the Women's Philanthropy Institute at Indiana University notes that most couples make giving decisions together, but this trend is changing to a more individual approach to giving. When women make decisions on their own, it sometimes tends to be a bit of a slower burn. We want to get to know the recipient of our generosity, as well as form real relationships, which is also why collective giving has become so popular lately.

This depth of generosity can also lend itself to an overwhelmingly positive experience and, quite frankly, make us feel beautiful. When we are kind, compassionate, and generous, it results in an authentic, inner beauty that emanates from the inside out. As human beings, our brains seem wired to see where real, true beauty lies, in being good from the inside out, and there's no Retinol or Vitamin C serum in the world that can do that alone!