

How the Brain Works: Giving and Receiving

As it turns out, there may be some truth to the saying that it is better to give than to receive.

According to the magazine *Nature*, recent brain research may have uncovered some of the reasons why people are willing to sacrifice material benefits to support causes. Researchers at the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke used magnetic resonance imaging to study the brains of individuals participating in their study. The participants were asked to decide whether to donate to a charity—all charities were associated with societal causes—or receive a monetary reward themselves.

As it turns out, there may be some truth to the saying that it is better to give than to receive. When the participants made donations, their brains' reward centers, which release chemicals that trigger feelings of euphoria, were more active than when participants decided to receive rewards themselves. And that's not all. When test subjects decided to donate money, another portion of their brains—the part responsible for releasing oxytocin, a chemical that increases feelings of trust and cooperation—was active, according to *Economist.com*. If you are looking for a pick-me-up, a charitable donation may give just the boost you need.