

Receive To Give

Some time ago, I had a friend come to me. They were in desperate need of my services as a therapist to help them overcome some of the challenges in their life.

Bill, as we will call him here, was unhappy, suicidal, virtually bankrupt and generally not in a good place.

I worked with him for three straight hours, helping him resolve his issues and create an action plan so he could move on and break through the blocks that were holding him back.

After the session Bill apologised to me for being in such a bad way and asked what he could do in return for all the help that I had given him.

As you do in this sort of situation, I just smiled and said nothing, it's my pleasure to help.

He looked at me and said, "But I've got to do something to repay you for everything you've done for me." The look of worry and concern on his face for not being able to pay me back struck me.

At that moment, I had a revelation. I could insist that he did nothing and send him on his way. But However, I looked at his face and realised that he really wanted to give something in return for what he had received.

I realised that the best way I could give anything to him at this point was to accept his offer and say yes. Doing this, I honoured him and I made him feel very special and wanted.

I replied to him, "Do whatever you feel appropriate."

He smiled, agreed, and changed the subject.

A few days later I had a phone call from Bill. He told me how well he was doing and how good life was feeling for the first time for months. He also invited me over to his house the next Friday night. I asked what for and he just said, "Just be there at 7pm."

There was no arguing with him.

7pm Friday arrived and I rang his doorbell. He opened the door and smiled when he saw me. "Welcome, come in Jason, it is lovely to see you," he shook my hand firmly and ushered me in the house.

He then looked at me and said, "You did so much for me the other night, I know you are a really busy person and I just wanted to do something to thank you."

Now Bill knew me pretty well and knew that two of my biggest passions were books and pizza. I have thousands of books on all sorts of subjects and collect them passionately.

He sat me down and gave me a glass of wine and we chatted for a while. Eventually Bill said, "Now, you did a lot for me the other day and I really appreciate it. I can't afford to pay you fully for your time."

At that point I started to mutter that it was not necessary, he was a friend, and so on.

However, he continued anyway, "So I have a little something for you instead."

He pulled a box out from under the coffee table and passed it to me. "These are for you to say thank you."

"You didn't need to," I said, feeling a little uncomfortable, and I opened the box. Inside were a stack of old paperbacks. I pulled them out and started to look through.

"It's not much I know, but I know how much you love books, and I had these in the attic and thought you would really appreciate them." Bill looked at me, a huge smile on his face.

The box contained about two dozen self-help classics dating from the 1950's. I was surprised and amazed.

"I want you to have this as a thank you for everything you have done for me and for helping me get myself sorted again." Just then the doorbell rung and Bill jumped up with an even bigger smile on his face, "Pizza's here" He said as he bounded to the door.

By giving Bill the chance to give something back for what I had done for him, it had boosted his self-worth. It had made him feel good because he had felt an obligation to me. This has been termed "The Law of Reciprocation". That is, when you do something for someone else, they feel obliged to do something back. By allowing them to do so, you can help to make them feel better about themselves and more worthwhile.

Next time someone offers to give you something, ask yourself if it is better for you to receive than give in that situation; by receiving you can often give more than you can imagine.

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