

The Helping Inventory (“Your Portfolio of Love”)

I. What are the different helping roles you play? For each of the following areas consider any conscious efforts that you made in the last two months. If you keep a calendar or diary, it may be helpful to review it. And when you consider your impact on friends, you may want to review your address book or phone bill. The more carefully you do this inventory, the more accurately it will mirror your efforts.

a) professional (include pro bono work, coaching co-workers)

b) volunteer

c) with family

d) informal (helping friends, or helpful interactions with strangers, also include citizen actions)

e) with money (count charitable donations and socially responsible investments)

f) through ecological personal lifestyle actions (recycling, composting, buying ecological products)

g) other (including political)

h) with yourself

II. Read each of the following five questions before answering the first one:

1. Which of the above helping situations have been rewarding? What are some moments of success and appreciation?

2. Which seem only marginally helpful?

3. Which forms of helping have yielded mixed results, both positive and negative?

4. What efforts to help have not yielded clear results, either positive or negative?

5. Which of these forms of helping have been draining? What isn't going well?

III. Mistakes made through omission and ways that you have hurt others. Consider broken promises, harmful actions, and failures to fulfill your duty or accepted roles. In general you should consider only significant mistakes. There are perhaps two categories: First, situations where the offended person is liable to remember and still consider it a demerit on your part. Second, situations where you perpetually fail to live up to your standards and where you feel bad about it. (Measure failures in terms of realistic expectations, not in terms of ideal or perfect behavior. For instance, there may be a thousand ways you failed to be the ideal friend, but consider only conscious acts and gross omissions. Another example, if you are a parent, your child may sincerely feel that you've let them down by not buying them a brand new car, but their expectations in that case may be unrealistic. Hence, it shouldn't be counted.)

a) professional (include pro bono work, coaching co-workers)

b) volunteer

c) with family

d) informal (helping friends, or helpful interactions with strangers, also include citizen actions)

e) with money (count charitable donations and socially responsible investments)

f) through ecological personal lifestyle actions (recycling, composting, buying ecological products)

g) other

IV. Other people's perspectives.

Obviously, in parts II and III above, you were judging your own actions from the perspective of the one doing good, not from the point of view of the person or persons receiving the help. To form a more accurate assessment of your helping, return to part I, and in each area where possible ask a person who knows of your actions in that area and who is likely to be candid, thorough and balanced for feedback on your helping.