

# Generosity and commitment to causes improve when giving is personal

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Whether the call to action is to support an important cause, save a life, or offer monetary support, new research shows it's the personal connection of giving that makes the giver feel more generous. This giving of oneself, from a signature to blood, increases feelings of generosity and in turn, increases the likelihood of continued support of a cause, according to research published in *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

In a series of five studies, psychologists Minjung Koo (SKK Graduate School of Business) and Ayelet Fishbach (University of Chicago Booth School of Business) examined the impact of various types of giving on the giver, including donating an endowment, anonymous vs personalized notes to people with disabilities, [donating blood](#) vs money, and signing a petition for future giving.

"Giving something that represents the self, such as giving one's own blood, signature, or possessions, will lead the giver to perceive herself as a more generous and committed person, compared to giving that is less associated with the self, like monetary giving," says lead author Koo.

"This change in self-perception has an important implication: the giver is more likely to give again in the future."

## The Power of Possession

In their first study, the researchers explored how giving an item that a person owned for a while versus only for a brief time influences givers.

Half the participants, 50 South Korean students, were told at the start of the study they could keep the pen, the other half only told they could keep it at the end of session. All participants were then asked to donate the pen. Those who possessed the pen the longest before donating it to a cause reported feeling more generous and committed, as well as seeing the pen as more valuable, than the short-term owners.

## **Donating Blood vs Money**

The researchers conducted two studies comparing donating blood and money; In both scenarios, participants imagined giving blood or not. The studies utilized 80 US workers who previously donated blood. Those who imagined donating blood reported higher generosity than those who imagined donating an equal value of money. The former group also reported stronger feelings of commitment. They followed this study with a similar one, this time allowing the participants to choose the option - donating blood or money - they felt was "easiest." Similar results were seen in this study.

## **The Power of the Name**

In two other studies, the use of a person's signature on form letters and charity donations also showed [participants](#) reporting themselves as more generous and committed than those who provided an anonymous note or donation. Those who provided their names also promised to donate again in the future.

"Across these studies, we find self-giving does not need to be public, effortful, or tangible; the only requirement is that giving is associated with the self," says Koo.

**More information:** M. Koo et al. Giving the Self: Increasing

Commitment and Generosity Through Giving Something That Represents Ones Essence, *Social Psychological and Personality Science* (2016). [DOI: 10.1177/1948550616628607](https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550616628607)

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