



A Vesak Day's Special:  
**Of Compassion  
and Charity**

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慈光福利协会  
METTA WELFARE ASSOCIATION

*Caring For Our Communities*  
关爱我们的社群

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# Altruism May Help Shield Teens From Depression



Teens who like to help others may be less likely to develop depression, a new study suggests. The study included 15- and 16-year-olds who were given three types of tasks: give money to others, keep the money for themselves or take financial risks with the hope of earning a reward.

The researchers monitored activity levels in a brain area called the ventral striatum, which controls feelings of pleasure linked to rewards. The teens were checked for symptoms of depression at the start of the study and a year later.

Activity in the ventral striatum in response to the different types of rewards predicted whether the teens would have an increase or decrease in depression symptoms, according to the study published online recently in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

"If they show higher levels of reward activation in the ventral striatum in the context of the risk-taking task, they show increases in depressive symptoms over time. And if they show higher reward activation in the pro-social context, they show declines in depression," study author Eva Telzer, a psychology professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, said in a university news release.

"This study suggests that if we can somehow redirect adolescents away from risk-taking or self-centered rewards and toward engaging in these more pro-social behaviors, then perhaps that can have a positive impact on their well-being over time," she added.

Previous research has shown that teens tend to have higher levels of ventral striatum activity, suggesting that they experience the pleasure of rewards more intensely than adults or younger children, according to the news release. Most of that research has focused on the link between ventral striatum activity and risk-taking by teens.

This study shows that ventral striatum activity may also have a positive effect in teens, Telzer said.

Original article extracted from: <http://news.health.com/2014/04/29/altruism-may-help-shield-teens-from-depression-study/>

## My Story – Finding Strength in Adversity

While most teenagers his age are engaged in the latest pop music and trends, Metta School student, Nazri, who has mild intellectual disability, spends most of his youth in KKH (Kandang Kerbau Hospital) battling acute leukaemia.

Nazri was first diagnosed with the condition two years ago during Hari Raya celebrations at home. He fell extremely sick for many days and was referred to the hospital for further checks. At 16, the unfortunate news was a great blow to the boy and his parents. Nazri had to stop attending classes at Metta School and spent the next year at KKH for chemotherapy sessions under close

observation. During his hospitalisation, Nazri was not able to go out of his ward for fear of an infection that might worsen his condition.

Despite his condition, Nazri remains an optimistic teen. He is not saddened by his condition and in fact, accepts it. Thankfully for Nazri, his friends and Metta school teachers and social worker visits him at the hospital regularly. Metta School social worker, Ms Jobina Chia, even brought a laptop for Nazri to play some computer games as he spends his time recuperating. But most of all, Nazri brightens up whenever his mother visits him at KKH. Nazri is immensely grateful to his mother for saving his life when she donated

her blood cells to him for his treatment.

As he puts it,

*"Without my mother, I wouldn't have survived. I wouldn't be here right now."*

Through his personal experience, Nazri hopes to be able to help and counsel other young people who have similar illnesses to overcome their grief and pain. With his cancer gradually in remission, Nazri also dreams to be able to be a commercial pilot one day; flying passengers all over the world and being able to visit less privileged countries to help the less fortunate.

## 7 Ways To Teach Your Child About Charity

It is said that a family that practices giving and charity inculcates children who will carry on the good habit into their adulthood. While most young people are living in the technological age of the latest electronic smart devices, it is a common sight to see young commuters not giving up their seats to the elderly and needy while on their smart gadgets leading to social media public shaming. How do we evolve from a nation of uncaring citizens to a gracious society where altruistic selflessness could be the next trend in Singapore?

Charity and the spirit of giving have been elevated to a new level in the past few years, following terrible natural disasters, wars, anarchic unrest in other countries, and terrorist attacks around the globe. After witnessing the horrific images of pain and suffering streaming steadily across their TV sets, more people than ever before have dipped deeper into their own pockets to offer much needed relief to the survivors of unprecedented tragedies.

Some parents are using the destruction delivered by these catastrophes as an opportunity to help children learn about charity and the importance of reaching out to others in their time of need. They have made generous family donations, often involving their children in picking out the charity, writing the cheque, preparing and mailing the envelope or simply to help out at a church service or a welfare organisation as a weekend family activity. They have allowed their children to witness how fortunate it is to be born in an average Singaporean family and not to take life for granted.

Clearly, recent disaster provide an opportune time to teach children about charity. How do parents teach their children to make charity an everyday affair? What if they want the spirit of giving to be a way of life for their children? How do they make charity become a habit?

### Family Charity Ideas

To help your children acquire the habit of charity, consider implementing the following tips as a family:

**1. Donate clothes and toys**  
Periodically go through your



closets rooting out clothes you haven't worn in a while, which can be given to charity organisations. Encourage your children to do the same. Allow them to select which clothes or toys they wish to donate. The value of this activity is diminished greatly if you go through their closets for them without their presence. For maximum benefit, get your children involved in choosing the appropriate items. Take your children with you when you drop the items off at the charitable destination.

### 2. Help neighbours

Regularly engage in a service-oriented project. Offer to clean the house/corridor of an elderly neighbour; perform little acts of kindness such as holding the door for others as they enter the lift, or even assisting an elderly neighbour if they are struggling with heavy loads.

### 3. Give blood

Take your children with you so they see you as a model for giving. Talk to them about why you choose to donate blood and how a little small effort can save a life.

**4. Make birthdays charitable**  
Set up birthday parties as a

time for giving to others. At your child's first school-age birthday party, ask guests to bring a gift of a book (new or used) to be donated to a local charity. Talk to your son about the books he has and about children who have no books. Explain that one way to celebrate a birthday would be to give to those who have less. Involve the birthday boy in the decision of whether not to give the books to charity. When you deliver the books with your child, record it on camera, and revisit that movie (or those pictures) on future birthdays as a remembrance that a birthday is never about oneself, but about sharing the joy and privilege with those who have less.

### 5. Include pets

At regular intervals, buy dog or cat food and take it to the pet welfare centres. Allow your children to spend some time with the recipients of the gift. And if it may be possible, adopt a pet to save a life. Letting your child partake in the caring and looking after a pet gives him a sense of responsibility.

### 6. Change for a difference

Create a charity jar to be used by the family when allowances are distributed. Invite children to share some of their allowance

with others through donating to the jar. As the jar fills, decide as a family where to contribute the contents. You may choose to save a stray, buy food supplies for a needy low-income person, or contribute to a charity among others. Read about various charities on the Internet and share this information with your children to help them make an informed decision.

### 7. Help elders

Do things for the elderly that they have trouble doing for themselves. Mop the floor for grandma. Teach grandpa how to use the Internet. Clean their windows or simply help them to plant flowers.

By implementing some of these ideas or others like them, you will be teaching your children that charity is not reserved only for emergencies. You will be helping them appreciate that reaching out to others in need is a way of life, rather than a moment in time when a catastrophic disaster occurs. Remember, while you are giving to others, you are giving your children important messages about your beliefs concerning the spirit of giving.

# Of Compassion and Charity

As we move ahead in our quest for growth and improvements, we should never forget our roots and return to society what was heaped unto us. This issue focuses on the essence of true charity and compassion. True charity is to give something without expecting anything in return for the gift and Compassion is to show benevolence to earth's living things and respect for life.

The meritorious deed of charity is highly praised by every religion. Those who have enough to maintain themselves should think of others and extend their generosity deserving cases. Among people who practise charity, there are some who give as a means of attracting others into their religion or creed. Such an act of giving which is performed with the ulterior motive of conversion cannot really be said to be true charity.

The Buddhism views charity as an act to reduce personal greed which is an unwholesome mental state which hinders spiritual progress. A person who is on his way to spiritual growth must try to reduce his own selfishness and his strong desire for acquiring more and more. He should reduce his strong attachment to possessions which, if he is not mindful, can enslave him to greed. What he owns or has should instead be used for the benefit and happiness of others: his loved ones as well as those who need his help.

Whenever somebody is in trouble and needs help, they should respond if they are able to. Furthermore, they should extend the same loving-kindness to society at large, to people of all races and creeds. They can donate liberally according to their ability to worthy causes or they can start nearer to home by extending compassion and aid to their elderly neighbours or helping someone in need. Only by adopting a pure heart with a broad attitude will serve to make one's life meaningful and rewarding.

Yours in the Dharma  
**Venerable Shi Pu En**  
 Executive Director  
 Metta Welfare Association



## Lunar New Year Lou Hei Buffet Luncheon 2015 28 February 2015 Metta Building

In appreciation to our donors, volunteers and supporters from all walks of life, Metta held its annual Lunar New Year Lou Hei Buffet Luncheon in recognition for their dedicated service to the organisation as well as to usher in the New Year.

The lunch isn't complete without our God of Fortune mascot who popped in for a surprise visit and entertained everyone with upbeat Lunar New Year songs and tossing of 'luck'. Metta's Executive Director, Venerable Shi Pu En, officiated the ceremony with a blessing ritual prior to lunch of which commenced with the auspicious starter, tossing of the *yu sheng*. Everyone eagerly grabbed their chopsticks as they tossed the delectable ingredients as high as they could go, peppered with auspicious Chinese idioms, words and phrases in a symbolism of wealth and luck.



## Metta Charity Walk Cum Family Carnival 22 March 2015 Metta Building and Metta School

The recent ended annual mega Metta Charity Walk cum Family Carnival 2015 proved to be another success as more than 5,000 participants and visitors joined us in the merry making in celebration of the nation's SG50 anniversary.

In its 18th year, the Metta Charity Walk cum Family Carnival is not complete without the endless choice of delish vegetarian delights and snacks; kiddy rides and games; foodstuff and wares and exciting stage performances to attract anyone.

The event preceded with Ms Jessica Tan, MP for East Coast GRC, flagging off the charity walk at 9am. The hour-long 3km walk commenced from the entrance of Metta Building and looped behind East Point Mall. Participants were greeted with the appetizing smells of foods and the cheery bustle of the crowd when they returned.

Our engaging emcees, Hui Si and partner entertained the crowd with their witty jokes and playful bantering as dance and song performances from Metta School students, various schools and volunteers, enthralled the audiences.

Everyone went off with satisfied happy bellies and cart home bagfuls of shopping hauls for that day. It was yet another successful carnival for Metta!

# Keppel Offshore & Marine-Metta Charity Golf Tournament 2015

15 and 16 July 2015  
Tanah Merah Country Club  
Title Sponsor: Keppel Offshore and Marine

Into its 16th year, Metta's annual flagship event enjoys yet another long-time support from its title sponsor, Keppel Offshore and Marine. This year, the event is held over two days at the Tanah Merah Country Club with Metta having the first flights on the first day, and subsequently with Keppel Offshore and Marine having 36 flights on the second day.

Gracing the event for Keppel as the Guest-of-Honour is Senior Advisor of Keppel Corporation Limited, Mr Choo Chiau Beng.

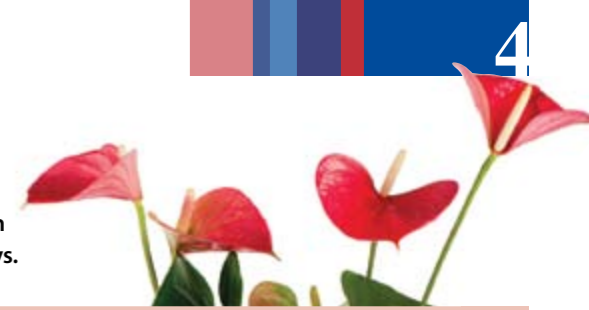
A gala dinner bash for the two-day tournament will expect entertaining acts from our talented students from Metta School who will display and enthrall the audience with their magnificent performances.



Photos taken from Keppel Offshore & Marine-Metta Charity Golf Tournament 2014.

# A Volunteers Tribute Special

This issue plays tribute to the remarkable people who have generously donated their time, expertise and energy to supporting and contributing to Metta Welfare Association. Read on as we uncover two angels who believed in paying it back to society in their own special ways.



## Life's Greatest Lesson

Retiree, Mdm Doris Foo, diligently commutes to Metta Welfare Association every Monday and Wednesday. The eloquent 65-year old senior who used to work as an administrator in a consultancy firm is a volunteer with Arts@Metta since 2013. On other days that she isn't volunteering, Doris take turns to help to look after her young grandchild.



Doris is an active and feisty lady. She believes the happiness to active ageing is keeping a healthy mind and body without being an idling retiree. Flexible schedule, a comfortable environment with great like-minded folks, excellent leadership from Alumni Executive, Ms Catherine Wong, are among the many reasons that Doris has continued to be a regular volunteer with Metta.

*"Keeping a healthy active lifestyle and mind is the answer to active ageing and there's no better way to it than to give back to society through volunteering."*

Doris Foo,  
regular volunteer at Arts@Metta

Through her volunteering experience at Arts@Metta also brings about new craft skills and the art of batik painting for Doris. Some of her adhoc duties includes framing the canvas cloths for the alumni youths to create their wonder pieces of batik art.

Doris added that volunteering opportunity allows her to improve on her well-being. Many times, the carefree schedule of being a volunteer makes her less anxious in life as she enjoys what she does.

Volunteering also taught Doris new things she never knew before: learning to communicate with youths with special needs. As she shared,

*"I never knew much about autism until I volunteered at Metta. This experience opens up my knowledge on how to communicate with people with autism."*

The experience also trains Doris to be a less anxious person and understand the importance of a good teamwork.

An advice that Doris would dish out to younger folks on the volunteerism spirit is to see that society can be more caring, giving and helpful. This way, the world would be a much better place to live in.

## Filial Piety Beyond Borders

Hairstylist, Li Hui, makes it a point to drop by Metta Day Rehabilitation Centre for the Elderly during his off days to offer free haircuts to the elderly clients because it brings joy and happiness to the 39-year old. A regular volunteer, Li Hui has been volunteering at Metta Day Rehabilitation Centre since July 2014.

At Metta Day Rehabilitation Centre, Li Hui could relate to the elderly clients, many of whom reminds him dearly of his aged parents. Using his hairstyling skills, Li Hui trims the hairs of the elderly clients as each took turns in queueing up for the free haircut.

A quiet man, Li Hui shares that by offering his free service to the elderly clients, he is reminded of his parents back in China. He relates in Mandarin,

*"I enjoy giving free haircuts to the elderly as this reminds me greatly of my aged parents back home. Through my simple efforts, I feel this is the best that I can do to honour them in my absence."*

Li Hui,  
regular volunteer at  
Metta Day Rehabilitation Centre

Hailing from Hubei, China, Li Hui came to Singapore in 2008. Like most foreigners, Li Hui sought to seek a better prospect for his future.

In a span of 7 years of working in Singapore, Li Hui, has grown to embrace Singapore as his new home. However, the distance and time away has also made him miss his family in China. It wasn't till a customer of Li Hui introduced the young man to Metta Day Rehabilitation Centre that he found a whole new experience in volunteering.

Li Hui's volunteer stint at Metta Day Rehabilitation Centre is only the beginning. He hopes to do more for society through other means of volunteerism if he had more time away from work. In the meantime, Li Hui continues to work hard at his dream of opening his own hair salon while returning to society the blessings that he has been given.





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