Contributing and Service Work

Dialectical Behavior Therapy defines Contributing as “refocusing attention from oneself to what one can do for others” (Linehan 1993b, p. 98). The skill of Contributing, Twelve Step “service work,” and the Twelfth Step all focus on learning to help others.

Service work is an important part of recovery because it keeps the person connected with the spiritual principle of humility and targets the self-centered component of addiction.

The following list provides examples of ways that you can practice the skill of Contributing. How have you contributed or participated in service work? Check all that apply:

☐ Gave a compliment to a peer
☐ Gave up a seat for someone (not just an elderly person)
☐ Welcomed a new group member or newcomer
☐ Shared honestly at a Twelve Step meeting
☐ Helped set up a Twelve Step meeting
☐ Asked someone how they were doing and listened to the response
☐ Talked to my sponsor
☐ Volunteered at a community outreach center
☐ Helped someone in need

1. Give three examples of your own:
   1. ______________________________________________________________________________________________
   2. ______________________________________________________________________________________________
   3. ______________________________________________________________________________________________
2. What did you notice when you practiced the skill of Contributing?

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3. What benefits of practicing Contributing did you notice?

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4. What were the surprising or difficult parts of Contributing?

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5. How did your experiences with Contributing relate to the slogan “We keep what we have only by giving it away”?

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