

MONEY / INVESTING

Want More Happiness? Try This Time-Tested Money Secret

By Juliette Fairley

When Samantha Galsic needed \$15,000 in four months to pay legal fees to gain full custody of her three-year-old daughter, she felt overwhelmed and angry.

"I didn't know how I was going to pull off coming up with an extra \$15,000 here and there," Galsic said.

After making her first payment of \$5,000 from savings, the registered nurse found that her income tripled and she was able to pay \$5,000 the next month quite easily.

"I was ecstatic when I noticed that the more I paid my attorney, the more I attracted opportunities to earn extra money," said Galsic who has since secured full custody of her daughter.

Like Galsic's experience with giving, the results of a study published recently found that people who give 8 to 10% of their income away to others are happy and that if the percentage of money donated were higher, the giver would be happier.

"The percent of income that you give is as good a predictor of your

After working with hundreds of donors who are giving big, we have almost never heard regret about giving too much," said Franklin, an adjunct professor of philanthropy at New York University. "In fact, what we hear far more often is that people were initially worried about giving big but once they started, they realized they could easily stretch and that giving big felt like a great use of their resources."

— Jason Franklin
Executive Director,
Bolder Giving
Adjunct Professor of
Philanthropy,
New York University



happiness as the total income that you earn because people who chronically give a higher percent of their income tend to be happier with their lives," said Michael Norton who co-authored *Happy Money: The Science of Smarter Spending* (Simon & Schuster, 2013).

About 88% of households give to charity, and the average annual household contribution is \$2,213 while the mean is \$870, according to the The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University.

"True generosity is flowing, connecting, life affirming and contains within it the spirit of

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letting go, which is pleasurable compared with the feeling of being stingy, which is constricting, lonely and miserable," said Larry Peltz, a Boston-based psychiatrist and author of *The Mindful Path to Addiction Recovery* (Trumpeter, 2013).

Although giving appears generous, Galsic isn't afraid to admit that she is downright selfish about it.

"If I hear a friend or relative is in bind, I don't hesitate anymore," said Galsic. "In fact, I look for ways to give to a worthy cause whether it's a friend or stranger. When I do, things seem to flow more smoothly in my life. In that sense, giving is selfish."

Giving includes not only donating money to charity but also buying gifts for loved ones and giving money to other people without expecting anything in return.

"Happiness is correlated with health and is good for humans in general," said Norton, who is an associate professor at Harvard University. "Happy people are more popular among their peers and happy people have better marriages. There's all sorts of other reasons why it's important to be a happy person and giving is one way to become a happier person."

Bolder Giving executive director Jason Franklin advocates a philanthropic system called the 50/30/20 rule.

To engage the 50/30/20 rule, focus 50% of giving to just one

or a few organizations or people that are meaningful. Secondly, set aside 30% to give to community, such as church, temple, schools or non-profits. Finally, create an impulse fund of 20% of your income for unexpected opportunities to give to the homeless, for example.

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Giving isn't new. It's been touted in the Bible as tithing.

"When we give cheerfully, we experience that sense of peace that not only make us happy in the moment but also healthier in the long run," said Cheryl DeBruler, a gift catalog specialist with World Vision, a Christian humanitarian aid organization. ■