

## **Ten Points of Advice for Volunteers**

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*from the Hiroshima Volunteer Network in Japan*

### ***Point 1. Start with What You Can Do***

Look around yourself and start with anything that you think you can do. Remember, it's very important to start with what is easier and to gradually move on to more challenging activities as you grow more confident. Starting with what you are sure you can manage, you can lay a solid foundation for future steps.

### ***Point 2. Don't Overburden Yourself***

Don't be too ambitious if you hope to continue your activities for any length of time. A modest but continued activity will win people's trust and help you to be able stay involved even longer. Remember that it's important to have the courage to say no to what you think is beyond your ability.

### ***Point 3. Put Yourself in the Other Person's Shoes***

As you get accustomed to your activity, you'll tend to want to have your own way. Any volunteer activity involves two parties: those who are in need of help and those who are trying to help them. The will and desire of the person whom you are trying to help should be your first and foremost priority. Remember to always reflect upon your own behavior and ask yourself how you can help them.

### ***Point 4. Keep Your Promises***

Never break promises you've made, even if they seem to be trivial ones that you just happened to make during casual chats. It goes without saying that you must keep your word regarding such things as when you'll visit and the kinds of services you are going to provide. Don't make an exception of children, either. They are counting on your help and relying on you. Your responsibility is a very heavy one. It would not be too much to say that the establishment of a trusting relationship with the other party is a key to your success as a volunteer worker.

### ***Point 5. Be a Good Manager of Your Time and Energy***

There is a limit to both the number of places where you can be involved and the amount of time that you can spend on your volunteer activities. Be aware of the limits, and match your efforts to your goals accordingly.

### ***Point 6. Obtain the Understanding of Your Family***

Basically, volunteer workers are required to provide their services when the other party needs them. Sometimes they have to work on Saturdays and Sundays, and sometimes they have to work for extended periods of time. Inevitably, volunteers end up spending less time at home, a possible cause for friction with their families. Don't sacrifice your family or your job for the sake of your volunteer activities. Obtaining full understanding of the people closest to you is an important early step to take.

### ***Point 7. Keep Secrets***

As a volunteer you will need to be knowledgeable about the other party, for your activities are based on personal ties and mutual efforts. Also, you'll learn various sorts of information through the course of your activities. Such information will be disclosed to you out of trust and to facilitate your volunteer activities. You must never pass this information on to others. Protecting people's privacy is not only common sense from the point of view of respect for their rights, but is also a basis for creating trust and fruitful volunteer activity.

### ***Point 8. Don't Let Religion and Politics Meddle In***

Some people become interested in volunteering because of religious beliefs or a sense of justice. Whatever your motivation is, you deserve credit for wanting to offer a helping hand to those who are experiencing troubles or difficulties. However, you must not attempt to persuade or force the other party to join a religion of which you are a member, or to support a political party which you favor. Respecting each other's rights to freedom of religion, thought, and belief is showing respect for basic human rights. And volunteer activities are, after all, essentially about respecting the human rights of others. It is very important to you to understand the gravity of this.

### ***Point 9. Don't Exchange Money or Goods***

Volunteer activities are not something you do coerced by others, but rather are done solely because you want to. No one can compel you to do anything in this context. In order to maintain the independence and freedom of your activities, you should not accept any kind of compensation or remuneration. Nor should you give any money or goods as assistance. Volunteer workers help others through their emotional support and good deeds. As for transportation fees and other costs involved in volunteer activities, however, the other party normally pays.

### ***Point 10. Learn from Your Activities***

Volunteer activities are not charity. Pushing kindness on others can be not only a nuisance, but also an obstacle to establishing a personal relationship on equal terms, since it divides the parties involved into a superior "giver" and a subordinate "receiver." Volunteering is not a one-way flow of assistance, but a mutual activity where you'll also learn from those who you are trying to help. Volunteer activities provide a wonderful opportunity for personal development and self-fulfillment.

*Source: <http://www.serviceleader.org/volunteers/10points>*