

O's Five-Point Plan to ... **GIVING BACK**

The message of the book *If It Takes a Village, Build One* is clear: Donate to a good cause and you'll not only help someone in need, you'll fulfil your spirit. By **AISHA I. JEFFERSON**

1 Find Your Authentic Self in Giving

Deciding which organisation to support can be daunting – there are so many worthy causes. A little research, though, can lead to self-discovery. “If you find the mode of service that speaks to the truest part of yourself, you’ll know the joy of giving – and you’ll be more likely to stay in it for the long haul,” says Malaak Compton-Rock, author of *If It Takes a Village, Build One*. First, determine the issues that mean the most to you. Next, identify the criteria that organisations must meet in order for you to support them. Then work out an amount to give, based on your budget. “Be passionate and educated about your choices,” says Compton-Rock.

2 A Little Goes a Long Way

Make a distinction between what people actually require and what you think they need. Sometimes giving is associated with being grandiose, by donating thousands, like celebrities or large corporations do. But the R50 you offer could help children get textbooks or receive a needed meal. Giving time or those jeans you haven’t worn in years are also great ways to help. Think about the difference you’re making more than the amount of your contribution, says Compton-Rock.

3 Get the Word Out

The cause that you’re supporting is having an important fundraising event and needs press coverage. Where do you begin? Create a press release with a snappy title and send it out to local media, advises Compton-Rock. Follow up after sending the releases and maintain a relationship with your media contacts. Also consider asking the press about placing pro bono ads, which some outlets offer to nonprofit groups. Other ways of spreading the word include leaving leaflets in key places, like a hairdresser’s, or promoting your cause on social media sites, such as Facebook or Twitter.

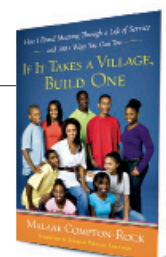
4 Know When to Take a Break

It’s okay to do a volunteer job and then move on to something else. What isn’t constructive is feeling guilty about taking some time out for you. “Volunteering is about doing something to help someone else while fulfilling your soul at the same time,” Compton-Rock explains. Remember, overcommitment could lead you to becoming overwhelmed, unbalanced and even resentful, defeating the purpose of giving back. “Take time off and move on to the next experience when you feel ready,” she recommends.

5 Pass It On

Don’t be shy about sharing your experience with family and friends. “Many people want to contribute, but they don’t know how or simply don’t realise that what they do for a living can actually be used for good. It may be up to you to let them know,” Compton-Rock says. The same could be said about planting the giving seed in children. Volunteer as a family, perhaps by organising a food-drive or saving coins in “donation jars” to give to charity. That’s “an easy way to make service part of your kids’ lives,” Compton-Rock says. **Q**

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