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COMMUNITY POINTE-CLAIRE THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2009

## SUZANNE KORF: Just how naughty and nice can you get away with?

POSTED BY [BOFARRELL](#) AT 8H44

by [Suzanne Korf](#)

It's that time of year when the jolly red fat man checks his list to see who's been naughty and who's been nice. But just how nice do you have to be?

And how much naughty can you get away with?

According to the founder of a nifty new organization called GIV3, you can be 97-per-cent naughty and just 3-per-cent nice and not only be rewarded but make the world a better place.

I recently attended a lecture given by GIV3 founder John Hallward who said that human beings are wired to seek happiness and shouldn't feel guilty about it. The pursuit of happiness helps us to avoid being complacent and motivates us to live through adversity. But it seems that most of us have been looking for happiness in all the wrong places.

According to studies that measure happiness, some of the wealthiest people are not the happiest. Canadians rank ninth in the world on the happiness scale, while south of the border, the Americans are in 16th place.

Furthermore, feelings of happiness have been declining in the last 65 years. Materialism and the pursuit of wealth are not making us happier. We work harder, longer hours. We spend more time alone on the computer and less time with friends and family.

So what will make us happy?

Researchers have found that when we do good things to show we care for others, our brains release dopamine, which stimulates feelings of warmth and happiness. It turns out that giving is receiving.

If giving makes us feel wonderful, more of us should want to give. But research also shows that 85 to 90 per cent of people do not have a good idea of what they should be giving or doing to help others. Do we have to give our life savings and prized possessions away? Do we need to spend our vacations helping to build houses in underprivileged communities? How much is enough?

According to GIV3, which is working to encourage people to be charitable, the good news is that we only need to give three per cent of our earnings or three hours per week to give a fair and reasonable amount.

Now, many people already know this. I recently attended the Pointe Claire Oldtimers Donations Night where they presented cheques totalling \$75,000 to 46 charities. The Oldtimers live true to their motto, "For the love of the game. For the good of the community." A lot of volunteer hours go into raising \$75,000 and the players spend time with their friends, away from their TV sets, getting great exercise and racking up a lot of "nice" points. We can all learn from them.

The average Canadian gives less than one per cent of their income and only one in four volunteers one or more hours per week.

While being only three-per-cent nice might not seem like a lot, many of us need to be just a little less naughty.

And now that we know, Santa better watch out. His "nice" list might be getting a whole lot longer.

*Suzanne Korf is a professional fundraiser who has worked for non-profit organizations for more than 25 years. She is a director of development for the Montreal Children's Hospital Foundation. She is a mother of two and a resident of Pointe Claire.*

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