

In 2004, Dan Buettner teamed up with National Geographic and hired the world’s best longevity researchers to identify pockets around the world where people lived measurably better. In these **Blue Zones** they found that people reach age 100 at rates 10 times greater than in the United States. Here are the **nine specific lifestyle habits** shared by the world’s longest living people. These lessons emphasize making changes to your environment that will influence your habits.

Move Naturally

Just Move: The world’s longest-lived people don’t pump iron, run marathons or join gyms. Instead, they live in environments that constantly nudge them into moving without thinking about it. They live in places where they can walk to the store, to their friends house or places of worship, their houses have stairs, they have gardens in their yards. Americans burn fewer than 100 calories a day engaged in “exercise”. We can get more physical activity naturally if we live in walkable communities, de-convenience our homes by getting rid of power tools and grow gardens. Walking is the best activity for longevity.

Right Outlook

Purpose Now: Knowing your sense of purpose is worth up to seven years of extra life expectancy. The Okinawans call it “ikigai” and the Nicoyans call it “plan de vida;” for both it translates to “why I wake up in the morning.” Do an internal inventory. Know your values, passions and talents—and how to share them on a regular basis .

Down Shift: Even people in the Blue Zones experience stress. Stress leads to chronic inflammation which is associated with every major age-related disease. What the world’s longest-lived people have that we don’t are routines to shed that stress. Okinawans take a few moments each day to remember their ancestors, Adventists pray, Ikarians take a nap and Sardinians do happy hour. Find a stress shedding strategy that works for you and make it routine.

Eat Wisely

80% Rule: “Hara hachi bu” – the Okianawan, 2500-year old Confucian mantra said before meals, reminds them to stop eating when their stomach is 80 percent full. The 20% gap between not being hungry and feeling full could be the difference between losing weight or gaining it. Serve food at the counter, store leftovers, then sit down to enjoy the meal. People in the Blue Zones eat their smallest meal in the late afternoon or early evening and then they don’t eat any more the rest of the day.

Plant Slant: Eat mostly a plant-based diet heavy on beans, nuts and green plants. Eat meat in small portions (the size of a deck of cards) fewer than twice weekly. Beans, including fava, black and soy and lentils are the cornerstone of most centenarian diets. Snacking on nuts—about a handful a day has been associated with and extra 2-3 years of life expectancy.

Wine at 5: Moderate drinkers outlive non-drinkers. Two glasses of wine daily will add years to your life, especially when consumed during a plant-based meal.

Connect

Belong: Recommit, reconnect or explore a new faith-based community. It doesn’t matter if you’re Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish or some other religion that meets as a community. Research shows that attending faith-based services four times per month will add 4-14 years of life expectancy.

Loved Ones First: Successful centenarians in the Blue Zones put their families first. Living in a thriving family is worth a half a dozen extra years of life expectancy. Invest time in your kids, nurture a monogamous relationship and keep your aging parents nearby.

Right Tribe: The world’s longest lived people chose—or were born into—social circles that supported healthy behaviors, Okinawans created “moais”—groups of five friends that committed to each other for life. Research from the Framingham Studies show that smoking, obesity, happiness, and even loneliness is contagious. Taking stock in who your friends are and expanding your social circle to include healthy-minded, supportive people might be the most powerful thing you can do to add years to your life.



This information was gathered from the Blue Zone website. To learn more about Blue Zones, visit bluezones.com