

# Keys to Living a Long Healthy Life

I began my career with a dream. I wanted to help people live long, joyful, healthy, meaningful lives, free from disease and stress.

I wanted to be a resource and support person to those wanting to achieve optimal health and to live their own dreams.

Part of this journey led me to examine research into the “Blue Zones”. Blue Zones are areas on the planet where unique societies live on average much longer than most humans. These “zones” exist in



various unrelated areas of the world, geographically, and include, regions in Sardinia, Greece, Costa Rica, California, and Japan. This fascinating research has uncovered some interesting common traits of long-lived peoples. First, we know from twin studies that only about 20% of life expectancy is governed by genes. This means that environmental and lifestyle factors are responsible for about 80% of how well and how long we live.

So, what are these factors that help us to age gracefully, joyfully, and well into our 90's and 100's? Following is a list that anyone can easily adopt and that all of these various societies have in common:

1. **Move Naturally:** These folks do not go to the gym or compete in grueling sporting events. They live close to nature and grow much of their own food. This keeps them active, in a natural, relaxed way.
2. **Have purpose:** This translates to “Why I wake up in the morning”. These people can answer that emphatically and feel relevant and important because of their role in the world they live in.
3. **Down Shift:** Deal with stress by routinely shedding it in healthful way. Give yourself a break daily. Relax and do things you love regularly.
4. **80%Rule:** Stop eating when you are 80% full. Eat slowly and savor your food. These people generally eat their smallest meal late afternoon or early evening and then don't eat after that.
5. **Plant Slant:** Beans are the cornerstone of most diets of long-lived people. Meat is consumed 1-2 times per week and in smaller quantities. Vegetables are a regular staple. Food is local, simple, seasonal, and flavorful.

**6. Wine @5: (now the good news!) Most of these centenarians drink wine moderately and regularly meaning 1-2 glasses daily with friends and/or with food.**

**7. Belong: Most of these people belong to a faith-based community. Denomination does not seem to matter, belonging and having faith do.**

**8. Loved Ones First: Families are put first in these groups. Aging parents and grandparents are kept close or even in the home, commitment to a life partner is important, and much time and love is invested in their children.**



**9. Right Tribe: Living in a social circle that supports healthy behaviour helps us to live longer, healthier lives. Both good and bad behaviour is contagious.**

**In this increasingly complicated world it may empower you to know that simple, easy, lifestyle habits exert the most control over your health and longevity. Common sense does prevail! Cooperation over competition, compassion over criticism, and service to oneself and others all contribute to healthy lives and communities.**