

1. Move Naturally 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 grow gardens and don’t have mechanical conveniences for house and yard work.

2. Purpose. 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.” Knowing your sense of purpose is worth up to seven years of extra life expectancy

3. Down Shift Even people in the Blue Zones experience stress. Stress leads to chronic inflammation, 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.

4. 80% Rule “Hara hachi bu” – the Okinawan, 2500-year old Confucian mantra said before meals reminds them to stop eating when their stomachs are 80 percent full. The 20% gap between not being hungry and feeling full could be the difference between losing weight or gaining it. 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.

5. Plant Slant Beans, including fava, black, soy and lentils, are the cornerstone of most centenarian diets. Meat—mostly pork—is eaten on average only five times per month. Serving sizes are 3-4 oz., about the size of deck or cards.

6. Wine @ 5 People in all Blue Zones (except Adventists) drink alcohol moderately and regularly. Moderate drinkers outlive non-drinkers. The trick is to drink 1-2 glasses per day (preferably Sardinian Cannonau wine), with friends and/or with food. And no, you can’t save up all weekend and have 14 drinks on Saturday.

7. Belong All but five of the 263 centenarians we interviewed belonged to some faith-based community. Denomination doesn’t seem to matter. Research shows that attending faith-based services four times per month will add 4-14 years of life expectancy.

8. Loved Ones First Successful centenarians in the Blue Zones put their families first. This means keeping aging parents and grandparents nearby or in the home (It lowers disease and mortality rates of children in the home too.). They commit to a life partner (which can add up to 3 years of life expectancy) and invest in their children with time and love (They’ll be more likely to care for you when the time comes).

9. 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 shows that smoking, obesity, happiness, and even loneliness are contagious. So the social networks of long-lived people have favorably shaped their health behaviors.