



# Seven secrets of longevity

Naturopath Caroline Robertson shows you how to glow through your golden years, with cues from cultures that commonly prevail past a century.

If you think ageing is an inevitable demise into deterioration, think again. Many people shine through their sunset stage with more meaning and pleasure than ever. If we can live up to 120 years, as scientists estimate, then why not enjoy it? Dan Buettner's book *The Blue Zones* reveals longevity tips from regions where 90 is the new 19, including Ikaria, Sardinia and Okinawa. For life-extension and life-expansion, incorporate their seven secrets into your life.

## 1. Move it or lose it

Movement makes us feel flowing, alive, energised. Exercise tones tissues, oxygenates cells, flushes toxins, clears cholesterol, strengthens bones, increases coordination, enhances balance and releases stress. Integrate exercise into your daily life as the Blue Zone communities do. Walk rather than drive, garden, do housework vigorously, and dance through your day! Even if bedridden, do gentle head, hand and feet rotations. Find an enjoyable activity and commit to it for at least 30 minutes three times weekly. When you're young at heart you're never too

old to try new things. Jeanne Calment, who lived to 122 years, took up fencing at 85 and rode her bike to her 100th birthday. Consider fast walking, jogging, climbing stairs, tennis, lunges, trampolining, lifting your own weight, and weight-lifting. Lifting weights decreased bone loss and increased bone density in women up to 70 years in a Journal of the American Medical Association study. Pilates, tai chi and yoga are excellent stretching and strengthening exercises. The Five Tibetans are a series of longevity exercises practised by Tibetan monks famed for their youthful vigour at advanced ages. Move with awareness of postural alignment to minimise wear and tear created by misalignment or dysfunctional movement.

## 2. Love life

When we lose the will to live, our hold on life is looser. A drive to survive gives us the strength and energy to endure. Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl observed that men who survived the Nazi concentration camp weren't necessarily physically stronger, but had a stronger reason to live. Frankl says we can find our meaning through three different ways: "By creating a work or doing a deed; by experiencing something or encountering someone; and our attitude to unavoidable suffering." Reinforce your will to live by focusing on your blessings, pursuing dreams, and accepting all as an enriching lesson.

## 3. Relax and rest

At 117, Misao Okawa was the world's oldest person until her 2015 departure. Misao credits her long life to a sushi diet and eight hours' sleep. Deep sleep is essential for cellular repair. Aim for at least seven hours nightly and a 10 minute siesta daily. Stress creates cortisone, which corrodes our tissues and cripples immunity. Geneticists found that chronic stress shortens the lifespan of cells by affecting telomeres, the ends of chromosomes that allow DNA replication. Stress is caused by suppressing our needs or emotions. Express and attend to your inner yearnings through self-care, as author Cheryl Richardson explains: "If you want to live an authentic, meaningful life, you need to master the art of disappointing and upsetting others, hurting feelings, and living with the reality that some people just won't like you."

## 4. Eating for the long haul

All ancient cultures ate a diverse diet high in nutrients, low in calories and fresh. Digestive weakness and deficiencies accelerate ageing. Avoid nutrient thieves, including acidity, alcohol, caffeine, sugar, carbonated drinks, hydrogenated fats, phytic acid, excess salt, and excess protein. Enjoy the Blue Zone regions' dietary examples of abundant organic vegetables, fruit, legumes,

wholegrains with a little fish, goat's milk and stable oils, such as olive or coconut. Check annually for common deficiencies such as vitamin D, B12, folate, iron, and iodine. Consider supplements to neutralise free radicals and renew cells, including antioxidants A, C, E, lipoic acid, resveratrol, selenium, and CoQ10. Maintain your ideal weight, avoiding type two diabetes and high cholesterol, with a low calorie diet and periodic fasting to give the digestion a break to repair through autophagy (self-eating of damaged cells). Fasting also switches on stem-cell synthesis, which is vital for immunity and regeneration.

## 5. Socialise

Having supportive social relationships is one of life's greatest joys. Hence it's no surprise that studies show those with strong social ties have a 50 percent higher likelihood of surviving longer. Giving and receiving help motivates us to get up every day. Living a long, lonely life isn't fun. Create connections with friends, family and your community to share life's highs and lows.

## 6. Clean living

Our cells renew at an amazing rate, with 100 million new red blood cells forming every minute. Nurturing cells in a healthy brain and body is key to longevity. Nobel prize recipient Dr Alexis Carrell proved that cells thrive indefinitely in a pure environment. "The cell is immortal. It is merely the fluid in which it floats which degenerates. Renew this fluid at intervals, give the cell something upon which to feed, and, so far as we know, the pulsation of life may go on forever." Cells age faster from chemicals, smoking, sugar, excess alcohol, oxidised fats, chemicals, deficiencies, overeating, inactivity, pollution and stress. Minimising these and periodic cleansing ensures your cells are soaking in ambrosia.

## 7. Ageless attitude

Embrace a positive pro-living faith, rather than anti-ageing fears. 'You're as young as you feel' was proven in Professor Ellen Langer's experiment, where elderly men lived as they did in their youthful 1950s for two weeks. Their appearance, hearing, eyesight, blood pressure, and lung function all improved, as opposed to the control group, who stayed the same. Stay young at heart by being playful, curious, and courageous. Forget phrases such as, 'I'm too old for that!' Believe the best is yet to come, with life getting richer as you ripen. Transcend senior stereotypes and ignore ageism, knowing you've earned the right to enjoy your twilight years on your terms. \*

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## Instant inspiration

"People don't die of old age, they die of inactivity."

*Jack LaLanne, 96 years*

"It's important to keep busy. You've got to have an interest in life."

*Ethel Robinson 100 years*

"Having a faith-based community can add four to 14 years."

*Dan Buettner*

"Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter."

*Mark Twain*