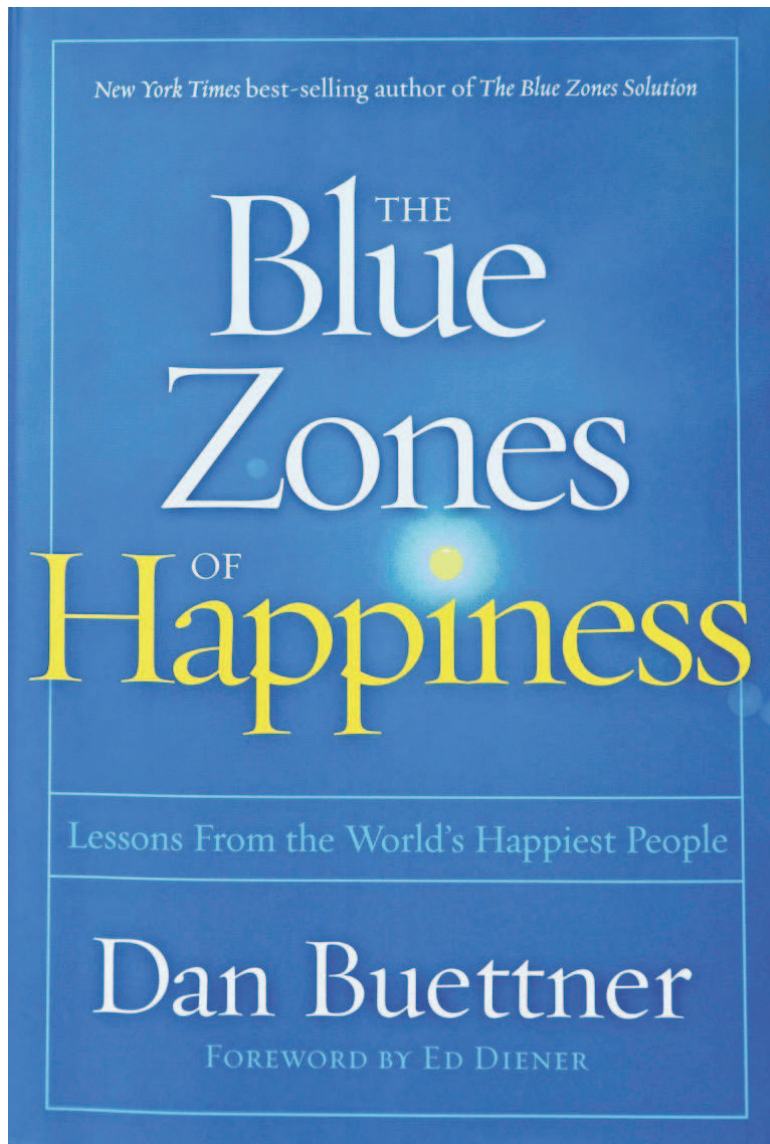


“Many age-related diseases are caused by an immune system out of balance. Excessive or unnecessary inflammation accelerates heart disease, bone loss.” - Dan Buettner, *The Blue Zone: Lessons for Living Longer From the People Who've Lived the Longest*

# GOT HAPPINESS?



The Blue Zones of Happiness by Dan Buettner NICOLE RAUCHEISEN/NAPLES DAILY NEWS

## Blue Zones founder Dan Buettner can help

Liz Freeman Naples Daily News | USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

Blue Zones Project guru Dan Buettner says he can help you get happy.

He lays out a framework for what is happiness and how to achieve it in his fourth book, “The Blue Zones of Happiness,” which expands on his journey over the last 15 years to showcase where people worldwide have the greatest well-being and longevity.

The new book lists the 25 happiest communities in the United States, with Boulder, Colorado, at the top spot. The greater Naples region is No. 11.

As the founder of the Blue Zones Project, which is helping more than 40 communities in the U.S. — including Southwest Florida — take steps to be healthier and live longer, Buettner outlines three foundations for happiness: Pleasure, purpose and pride.



Buettner

“Happiness is a composite of those three,” Buettner said.

The book offers a test that can tell if you are experiencing a deficit in any of the three strands of happiness, along with strategies to strike a better balance, he said.

Pleasure is about how much people enjoy their lives on a day-to-day basis; pride is life satisfaction and accomplishment; and purpose is about using your strengths to do what you do best, he said.

Buettner, who is an explorer for National Geographic, identified the world’s happiest places as Costa Rica, Denmark and Singapore. He uses research and data, yet profiles individuals and how they have achieved happiness.

Each of the three places stands out in one of the three foundations of happiness, he said. People in Singapore have great life satisfaction or pride, while Costa Rica residents place great emphasis on their social interaction. Residents of Denmark live with more purpose than anywhere else.

Residents of Denmark wouldn’t dream of accepting or staying in a job they don’t like, he said. That’s a big difference with Americans, where only one-third of Americans say they like their jobs.

The greater Naples area, which was introduced to the Blue Zones Project several years ago by Dr. Allen Weiss, the president and chief executive officer of the NCH Healthcare System, is mentioned in the happiness book.

Buettner talks briefly about how Naples was once a “sleepy winter getaway” for wealthy Midwest families and how today 64 percent of the 46,000 children rely on the free or reduced lunch program in school.

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# Happiness

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He touches on Naples being in the top spot for overall well-being in 2016 by the Gallup-Sharecare survey of 189 cities.

The reason Naples/Marco Island/Immokalee came out lower on his list of 25 happiest places is due to the 16 questions asked of respondents in the happiness survey, he said. A key question in the happiness survey asks if people feel safe and secure where they live. Where one lives plays a big role in happiness, he said.

The greater Naples area launched the voluntary Blue Zones initiative in 2015 to promote better health and longevity. Now more than 100 companies, non-profits, churches and other entities are embracing it by making lifestyle changes that dovetail with Buettner's "Power Nine" principles of longevity, detailed in his earlier books. His three earlier books are "The Blue Zones," "Thrive" and "The Blue Zones Solution."

In the latest book on happiness, Buettner said 40 percent of happiness is predetermined by genetics, 15 percent is determined by luck, and the remaining 40 to 50 percent is in one's control.

"Happiness is also about mitigating or eliminating the sources of daily stress," he said.

When it comes to the top 25 happiest places in the U.S., some shared elements are walkability, abundant green spaces and parks, and trends among residents to eat more fruits and vegetables over convenience food.

Buettner recruited 15 researchers to develop a master list of more than 120 strategies for achieving happiness that were narrowed down to a top 10 list of policy recommendations. A second list involves 10 personal recommendations.

**The 10 personal recommendations are:**

1. Prioritize friends and family.
2. Get involved in a club, a team, or a civic or religious organization.
3. Learn the art of likability.
4. Get at least 30 minutes of physical exercise daily.
5. Focus on the happiness of others.
6. Make a best friend at work.
7. Monitor your health.
8. Live together, but choose the right spouse.
9. Savor life in the moment — in the moment or in anticipation of positive future events.
10. Set meaningful goals and monitor progress.