

Blue Zones

“I think that age as a number is not nearly as important as health. If you’re in good health, you can enjoy things into your ’80s.” – Bob Barker



Use the Power of 9 principles to keep your heart healthy. SUBMITTED

Blue Zones Power of 9 principles great way to keep heart healthy

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As we prepare for American Heart Month in February, it’s important to consider ways to keep your heart at its very best so you can live a long, healthy life. The Blue Zones Power 9, a set of principles followed by the world’s longest-lived people, provides an easy to follow way that your heart will love.

1. Move Naturally

The world’s longest-lived people aren’t necessarily in the gym for hours on end running on a treadmill or lifting weights. Instead, they move without thinking about it. This includes yard work, washing dishes, or even walking to the store. In fact, a new study in JAMA revealed that compared to women who get less exercise, those who get lots of light physical activity may have up to a 42 percent lower risk of dying from coronary problems, such as heart attacks, and a 22 percent lower risk of developing cardiovascular disease¹.

2. Purpose

Knowing your sense of purpose may lower your risk of heart disease. A 2015 study presented by Mount Sinai St. Luke’s and Mount Sinai Roosevelt found that a high sense of purpose is associated with a 23 percent reduction in death from all causes and a 19 percent reduced risk of heart attack, stroke, or the need for coronary artery bypass surgery (CABG) or a cardiac stenting procedure.

3. Down Shift

Many studies have documented that various forms of stress can take a toll on the heart making the need for downshift in your

life an important one. Downshift strategies include meditation, yoga, deep breathing exercises, naps and light exercise.

4. 80% Rule

“Hara hachi bu!” Okinawans use this term to remind them to stop eating when their stomachs are 80 percent full. The 20 percent gap between not being hungry and feeling full could be the difference between losing weight or gaining it, and it is no secret that obesity and cardiovascular disease are linked.

5. Plant Slant

While we’ve all heard that veggies are good for you, there are many reasons for this and one of them has to do with your heart. A recent report in the Journal of the American Heart Association reports that diets higher in plant foods and lower in animal foods were associated with a lower risk of cardiovascular morbidity and mortality in a general population³.

6. Wine at 5

That’s right! There’s even more reason to drink wine, in moderation of course. It can be good for you and your heart! A key ingredient in red wine known as resveratrol might help prevent damage to blood vessels and reduce LDL cholesterol.

7. Belong

Belonging to a faith-based community has many benefits that include a sense of peace, support and acceptance. But, did you know that it can lower your risk of dying from heart disease? Women who reported attending religious services at least once a week also had a 27 percent lower risk of dying from cardiovascular causes. Can we get an Amen?

8. Family First

Many successful centenarians in the Blue Zones put their families first. This means keeping aging parents and grandparents nearby or in the home since it lowers disease and mortality rates of children in the home too.

9. Right Tribe

American entrepreneur, author and motivational speaker Jim Rohn said, “You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.” Guess what? If you spend time with people who engage in unhealthy behaviors like excessive drinking, smoking, sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy diet, chances are you will too. Surrounding yourself with people that support heart-healthy behaviors will increase the likelihood of you doing the same. And of course, spending time with the right people helps combat loneliness, lowers blood pressure and increases happiness which your heart appreciates.

Learn more ways to incorporate the Power 9 in your own life, worksite, church, HOA, school, restaurant, or grocery store by visiting BlueZonesProject.com.

Move naturally with Track Your Trek, a community-wide step challenge. Track your steps for 10 weeks and then celebrate your accomplishments on April 4 at North Collier Regional Park. Our goal is for Southwest Florida to walk the distance it takes to get to all 5 Blue Zones locations around the world (1: Ikaria, Greece 2: Sardinia, Italy 3: Okinawa, Japan 4: Loma Linda, California 5: Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica). To RSVP, visit Trackyourtrek2020.eventbrite.com.

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