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The Blue Zones: Lessons For Living Longer From The People Who've Lived The Longest



Synopsis

Award-winning author and researcher Dan Buettner has traveled the world to meet the planet's longest-lived people, and learned nine powerful yet simple lessons that could put you on the path to longer life. Where did he find them? In the Blue Zones. Blue Zones are communities where common elements of lifestyle, diet, and outlook have led to an amazing quantity - and quality - of life. Dan Buettner shares the secrets from four of the world's Blue Zones. Buettner's extensive study uncovers how these people manage to live longer and better, but found in the everyday things they do: the food they eat, the company they keep, and their very perspectives on life. In The Blue Zones, they become yours to follow for life!

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Back in the 50's, it was the Hunza people who were exemplars of long-lived folk in popular literature about healthy living. The Hunza valley is popularly believed to be the inspiration for Shangri-la, the place of the immortals in James Hilton's novel "Lost Horizon." The Hunza live in high altitude, eat whole grains, and this was the model for much of health food lore in the 50's. Then there were the Georgians, famous in the 80's, whose long life was attributed to the consumption of yogurt. Now it's the Okinawans, Mediterraneans and Costa Ricans who have the secret of long life. The "Blue Zone" is how these areas with a high percentage of centenarians is designated. In this book, the author combines lessons from various zones around the world. In this way, not only are the different cultures described, but the commonalities are easily derived from the chapters. And they are hardly surprising, but it's great to have them all in one book because you can see that it's

not yogurt or fermented mare's milk or a diet rich in tofu and fermented bean paste and fish--it's healthy habits. They are pretty much (no surprise here), a diet including plenty of fresh, unchilled water, lots of vegetables, limited meat and fats and sweets, and the habit of hard farm work or walking and exercise and having a richly entwined family life and close group of friends--a support system. (Doesn't the Bible say "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you." Exodus 20:12) This book is excellent not only for the interesting anthropological information, but because you can see that long life is really something that is a matter of habits and practices, not just eating a bowl of yogurt or using olive oil instead of butter.

Let's begin with content unmentioned by previous reviewers. In the United States, only about one male per 20,000 reaches age 100 (p. 44). The almost-daily consumption of nuts is important to good health and long life (e. g., p. 130). On the other hand, supplementation with DHEA, human growth hormone, or melatonin is questionable and probably harmful (p. 13). Friendly intestinal bacteria are important, and these are thwarted by processed foods, excessive consumption of meat, surgery, etc. (p. 92). The geographical format of this book takes the reader to "Blue Zones" (areas with high concentrations of long-lived people) all over the world. One of them is right in the USA--the Seventh Day Adventist community 60 miles east of Los Angeles. Now consider the Okinawans. Though not Japanese themselves, they had been conquered by the Japanese, and forced to fight against the Americans. Many Okinawans, frightened by tales of American atrocities, committed suicide upon the approach of the American forces. Instead, the Americans helped the Okinawans. Ironically, however, the Okinawans were subsequently hurt by the Americans--but in a totally unexpected and unintentional way. Americans built a lot of fast-food joints, and the health of the Okinawans--especially the younger ones--began to decline. This book not only provides suggestions for extending one's lifespan, but also gives the reader an invaluable set of geography lessons. In the end, centenarians really cannot tell us why they lived to an age of 100 or more (p. xxi). But this book is fascinating nonetheless. There is a bibliography at the end of the book for further reading on the topics of longevity, better health, stress-free living, etc. The citations come from magazine articles, books, and scientific and medical journals.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. There are a handful of books I have read that have immediately affected my life, caused a change in behavior, or redirected me down a new path. This is one such book. Blue zones are those areas across the globe where pockets of longevity can be found. In blue

zones, there are an unusually high number of centenarians living compared to other populations. In *The Blue Zones*, the author, Dan Buettner, explores four blue zones: Sardinia, Italy; Okinawa, Japan; Loma Linda, California; and the Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica. After reading about the lifestyles, eating habits, cultural customs, and social behaviors of the centenarians living in the blue zones as introduced in this book, it has made me realize how out of synch I am with the natural and spiritual rhythms of life. And I don't mean this in an "I am going to start making my own soap and hugging trees" context. I suppose it's more of a reinforcement of what I have suspected. I just couldn't put my finger on it until reading this book. There are several lessons in the book and the author condenses them to nine lessons toward the end of the book. I suppose each individual will take away different lessons that will apply to them in their current time and place. I can imagine what it would be like to get up with the sun, walk to work, and work with my hands, followed by a mid-day meal of local grown fruits and vegetables with several family members and friends surrounding me. If you like red wine, Pecornio cheese, green tea, nuts, tortillas, fruits and vegetables, strong social networks, family and friends, a sense of purpose, a belief in God, walking, working, moving, fresh air, and sunlight, then you will probably enjoy this book.

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