

THE SILVER TIP

Thriving in 2025 With the Blue Zones Nine

By James Fly

By now, you've probably heard of the Blue Zones—special regions where the world's longest-living people thrive. These areas include Okinawa, Japan; Sardinia, Italy; Ikaria, Greece; Loma Linda, California; and the Nicoya Peninsula of Costa Rica. Researcher Dan Buettner, in collaboration with the National Geographic Society, studied the lifestyles of these populations and discovered nine common denominators that contribute to their longevity. These evidence-based habits help people live far beyond the average life expectancy of 78.2 years in the U.S., which, when you think about it, isn't that long at all!

Interestingly, one thing the people in Blue Zones do not have in common is an extraordinary gene pool. The Danish Twins Study found that genetic factors account for only about 20% of lifespan. The remaining 80% is influenced by lifestyle choices. This means that our daily habits, routines, and decisions play a major role in how long and how well we live. So, what are the "Power Nine" habits that can help us not only live longer but also thrive in 2025 and beyond?

By understanding and applying these nine lifestyle principles, each of us has the potential to enhance our health and longevity. These habits can help us build healthier, more fulfilling lives, no matter where we live or what our starting point is. Adopting even a few of these habits could be a step toward a longer, happier life. Turn to page 5 of this newsletter to learn more about them.



Submissions Wanted!

Dear Community,

Contribute to our upcoming newsletter and let's showcase the richness of our collective experiences. Share anecdotes, recipes, poems, or timeless advice by the 15th of each month. Drop off submissions at the front desk or email pcsc.newsletter@gmail.com. Let's weave a tapestry of our shared journey. Thank you for sharing your stories and being a vital part of PCSC!



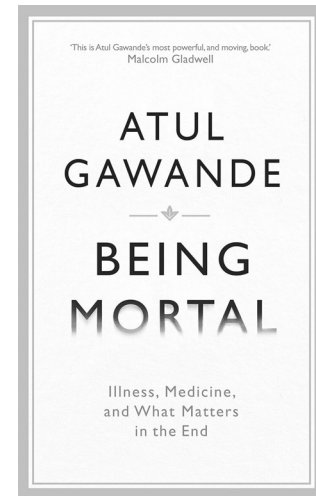
The Talk We All Need: A Conversation About the Inevitable

Published in the *Park County Journal* on December 8, 2024, Nurse Jill's article "It's Time for the Talk" addresses an important but often uncomfortable topic: end-of-life conversations. Drawing from her years of experience as an ICU nurse, Jill encourages readers to confront the inevitable with thoughtful planning. Using Benjamin Franklin's saying, "Nothing is certain except death and taxes," she frames the conversation about death as something that should be addressed proactively.

Jill highlights the challenges families face when they haven't discussed end-of-life wishes in advance, often leading to difficult decisions under stress. She stresses the importance of asking key questions like, "What would you want if your quality of life was at risk?" or "How long would you want to be on life support?" These discussions provide clarity and ease the burden on loved ones.

The article also recommends resources like Atul Gawande's *Being Mortal* and tools such as Living Wills and Advanced Directives. Jill emphasizes that these conversations are not just for the elderly or chronically ill but for everyone. By normalizing these talks, we ensure our final wishes are known, giving both individuals and their families peace of mind, closure, and dignity in the face of life's inevitable end.

If you missed this noteworthy article just head over to the *Park County Journal* website at pcjournal.com. Once there, look for the link to their archives and you can access the issue. You'll find the article on page 10.



Volunteers Needed

The Park County Senior Center is seeking dedicated volunteers to join our team and make a positive impact in the lives of our senior community members. Whether you have a few hours a week or more, your time and talents can help us provide essential services and enriching activities to seniors in our area. If you are interested in making a difference, please contact Garrick Faust at this address: garrick@parkcountyseniorcenter.org or call 406-333-2276. Your involvement can bring joy and support to those who need it most!

Blue Grass Plus Music Jam Continues!



Join us for the Bluegrass Plus Music Jam every **2nd and 4th Saturday, 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM**, at the Park County Senior Center in Livingston, Montana! Musicians, bring your instruments and passion as we create a vibrant musical community. Share your talents and immerse yourself in the lively atmosphere. It's a perfect opportunity to connect with fellow music enthusiasts. Let the strings resonate and the melodies flow in this harmonious gathering.

See you there!

Bereavement Support Group at Livingston Healthcare

You may be experiencing how difficult your bereavement journey can be. During this challenging time, we invite you to join the **Livingston HealthCare Bereavement Support Group**. A support group is a safe space—where you can share your personal story, express your emotions, and connect with others who are also navigating their own grief. It offers a community of people who understand and can share their struggles, helping you feel less alone in your experience.

•**Weekly meetings every Wednesday from January 8 through May 7.** The group will meet every Wednesday from 1:00 to 2:00 PM, providing a consistent and caring environment for you to process your emotions and find support from others who truly understand what you're going through.

•**Loss is shocking, and your grief is unique.** The pain of losing a loved one can be overwhelming, and it's important to remember that you have the right to experience your grief in your own way. There is no "right" or "wrong" way to grieve, and it's okay to feel a wide range of emotions throughout the process.

•**Living with grief can leave you feeling depleted.** The weight of grief can sometimes be too much to bear, leaving you emotionally and physically exhausted. A support group helps you transition through your grief in a safe, supportive environment, offering comfort and reassurance during this difficult time.

•**Please bring a notebook or journal.** We encourage you to bring a notebook or journal to each meeting. Writing down your thoughts, feelings, and insights can be a therapeutic way to reflect on your grief journey and track your progress over time.

For more information or to register, please contact
Rebecca Sulages, LCSW at 406.823.6888
Registration Price: Free but registration is required



I want to get old gracefully. I want to have good posture. I want to be healthy and be an example to my children. — *Sting*

Calling For Ideas for Activities at the Senior Center

Ignite creativity at Park County Senior Center! Have a community activity idea? Lisa Harreld, Board Member, is ready to chat. Let's transform our center into a hub of vibrant experiences. Reach out, share your vision, and let's make the Senior Center even more amazing together! Contact Lisa at the Center (406-333-2276 or 651-270-4168). #CommunityCollaboration #ParkCountySeniors

Meditation is not a Religion

by Christine Hillegass, Psy.D.

Many people in the West have the mistaken belief that meditation is strictly a Buddhist practice. But you can learn to meditate no matter your religion. Many of the early Christian fathers and mothers practiced a type of meditation and were called “contemplatives”. It’s unfortunate that this went out of practice and has taken Eastern philosophers and writers to reintroduce this to the West.

There have been reams of research studies in the past few years that attest to the fact that regular meditation can have significant benefits to our health. It can improve immune function to help fight off infection, it can modify cardiovascular factors, improving cholesterol levels, blood pressure, and heart function. Research has also seen improvement in mental health functioning as well as in psychiatric problems such as anxiety disorders and clinical depression.

Meditative techniques, though bringing a sense of calm, is not the same as relaxation techniques. Relaxation techniques tend to focus on the physical, the body. Meditation on the other hand focuses on the mind. It is a technique that strengthens focused attention, and helps us become more aware of our mental processes as they are happening.

Chris is a retired psychologist who had a practice here in Livingston for 25 years. Come join our biweekly meditation group that meets at the Senior Center every other Tuesday at 1:00 P.M. (Due to the holidays, the next meeting will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 7.)

3			8	5		1		
					3			4
7			6	2		8		
1		5	7		9			
	2				1			6
					5	7	8	
		9		4				8
		3				6		
	8							3

Sudoku Fun!

To solve a Sudoku puzzle, fill the 9x9 grid so each row, column, and 3x3 sub-grid contains the numbers 1 through 9 without repetition.

3	6	4	2	7	1	9	8	5
7	2	9	8	6	3	5	1	4
8	1	5	6	3	4	9	7	2
9	3	4	2	6	5	7	8	1
8	2	7	4	3	1	9	5	6
1	6	5	7	8	9	3	4	2
7	9	1	6	2	4	8	3	5
6	5	8	9	1	3	2	7	4
3	4	2	8	5	7	1	6	9

Thriving in 2025 With the Blue Zones Nine

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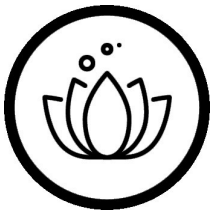
1. Moving Your Body

It's really no secret that our bodies were designed to move and not to sit all day long. In fact too much sitting is considered to be as bad for our health as smoking! But you don't have to run a marathon in order to achieve the benefits of exercise. Most people in the Blue Zones incorporate movement into their daily lives--activities as simple and natural as gardening or walking. The best exercise, in fact, is the one you'll do whether it's dancing, running, Tai Chi, yoga or joining a gym such as the new workout facility at the **Park County Senior Center**. Everyone can and should find a way to move their bodies in an enjoyable and comfortable way.



2. Having a Purpose

A man I met in California recently told me, "If you don't have a reason to get out of bed in the morning, you'll stay there." To live a long and fulfilling life we all need a purpose, serving our community with our unique talents, resources and interests. Having a purpose translates into seven extra years of living according to Buettner's team of medical researchers.



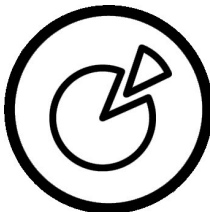
3. Downshifting (Relaxing)

People in the Blue Zones work hard but they also take time to relax and recharge, helping cool down chronic inflammation which has been associated with the major diseases that cut short the lives of otherwise healthy people. Relaxing can take many forms such as vacations, coffee klatches, church socials, listening to music or simply sitting on the front porch and watching the sunset. While activity is important, rest and relaxation are equally so.



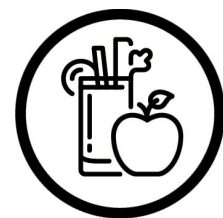
4. 80 Percent Rule

Okinawans eat with "Hara Hachi Bu" in mind, or the 80 percent mantra, which means that you stop eating when you feel 80 percent full. In fact the 20 percent gap between hunger and satiety could be the difference between weight gain or loss. Timing of their meals also contributes to their health and longevity. Typically, blue zoners eat their smallest meal in the late afternoon or early evening, which helps them sleep deeper and longer, another important factor in longevity.



5. Plant Slant

None of the Blue Zoners are vegetarians except for the Seventh-day Adventists living in Loma Linda, CA., but they do include many plants in their diets based on the crops grown in the areas where they live, and many of these plants come from the legume family, which are good sources of fiber and protein. Okinawans eat soybean products while black beans are a staple in the diet of Costa Ricans. The **Park County Senior Center** hosts a monthly vegan potluck where you can taste a variety of plant-based dishes and enjoy socializing. The potluck is held on the second Sunday of the month at 4:30 p.m.



(Next page)

6. Happy Hour (optional)

You may not imbibe alcohol like the teetotaling Seventh-day Adventist blue zoners of Loma Linda, Ca., so this one is optional. However, almost all the people living in the other blue zones drink alcohol (particularly red wine) on a regular basis, and their health seems the better for it. They don't drink alone and almost always drink their wine with food, and never more than two glasses. Interestingly enough, moderate drinkers outlive non-drinkers! Of course if you abuse alcohol, it's best to avoid it altogether...

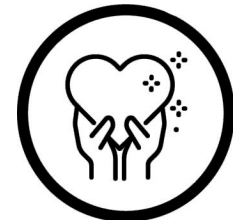


7. Join a Faith-Based Community

Almost all Blue Zoners belong to a faith-based community, and it doesn't seem to matter what religion or denomination it is. According to the research, you can add from four to 14 years to your life by attending faith-based services four times a month!

8. Prioritize Loved Ones

Blue Zoners put their families first by keeping ageing parents or grandparents either in their homes or nearby. This alleviates loneliness, which has been recently identified as a major risk factor of mortality. Family cohesion fosters inter-generational socialization between the young and the elderly, benefiting both groups. People living in the Blue Zones often commit to a life partner which can add up to three years of life expectancy.



9. Right Tribe

Beyond the inner circle of family, Blue Zoners socialize on a regular basis with friends they have bonded with, often for life. Supportive relationships make all the difference in the perception of happiness. The **Harvard Study of Adult Development**, the longest running study to date on what makes people happy concluded that positive relationships with others is the single most important factor that determines happiness, which, by the way, contributes to longevity. "Taking care of your body is important but tending to our relationships is a form of self-care too," said Dr. Robert Waldinger, director of the study.



We are living in Park County, Montana and not in one of the blue zones. But by incorporating these principles into our lives we can create our own personal blue zone.
(Source: bluezones,.com)



BLUE ZONES PROJECT®