

# LIVING WITH PURPOSE

Having a sense of purpose in life – something to live and strive for – is an important part of being happy, successful and productive.

As Nietzsche wrote, 'He who has a why to live for can bear almost any how.'

Cultivating a sense of purpose comes from a belief that we are connected to something bigger than ourselves, whether that forms part of a spiritual belief system or is related to being part of a community, family or project.

## Research shows how purpose impacts our health and quality of life:

- According to a study published in the New Scientist, a sense of purpose helps prevent heart attack and stroke and staves off dementia. It also enables people to sleep better, have better sex and live longer
- Research published in one of the journals of the Association of Psychological Science, suggests that having a purpose in life is an indicator of healthy ageing as it 'appears to widely buffer against mortality risk across the adult years'
- An earlier study of Japanese men and women found that those who had a strong connection to their sense of purpose (called ikigai) tended to live longer than those who didn't
- In his study of 'Blue Zones' (communities around the world where people are more likely to live past the age of 100), Dan Buettner identified the factors common to most centenarians – and one of them is a strong sense of purpose.

## WAYS TO BOOST YOUR SENSE OF MEANING

To enhance your sense of meaning, consider the following:

- The people who need you, and in whose lives you make a difference
- Goals or dreams that excite you
- The roles that only you, with your unique make up, play. Think of all the ways you make a valuable contribution.

The more connected we are with our surroundings, the more valued we will feel and the better our sense of meaning will be. Remember that no one is defined by any one set of circumstances, and we are empowered to make changes in areas of our lives we do not feel satisfied in. It's up to us! This leads on to the idea of self-reliance.

Self-reliance is the confidence that we have the ability to do what needs to be done, that we can get through difficult times and meet life's challenges.

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## TIPS TO BOOST SELF-RELIANCE

If you feel you can't always rely on yourself, think about the situations below:

- Have you ever thought: 'This is impossible, I can't do this'? And then surprised yourself and managed to achieve or overcome the challenge you thought you couldn't?
- Think of some occasions where others have relied on you. How often have you pulled through for them?
- Think of three times when you've set yourself a task. It could be anything from throwing a party to making a difficult phone call. What skills did you use to carry out these tasks? Take the time to pat yourself on the back and acknowledge your achievements in these tasks. They may seem small or insignificant, but these achievements prove to you that you have what it takes to follow through on your plans.

*With a strong sense of meaning and purpose driving us, and renewed confidence in the knowledge that we can plan and achieve our goals, we can accomplish anything!*