

# Cultures Around the World Show Us How Life Purpose Fuels Longevity



By Alexandra Preston | [Natural Society](#)

We know instinctively that meaning and purpose are necessary in order to live a fulfilling life, with those of us in a career we love often held in high regard. But regardless of how passionate you may be about your career, **we all need a hobby – an interest outside of work that we truly love to do.** The benefits of purpose and hobbies, however, go beyond the **quality of life.**

Japanese culture has a concept [called \*ikigai\*](#), which roughly translates to “purpose in life.” *Ikigai* has traditionally been associated with health and longevity. One study on over 4000 adults set out [to determine if this theory was true.](#)

All participants were over 65, with:

- More than 1800 identified as at high risk of death
- More than 1200 at high risk of losing the ability to perform activities of daily living (ADLs)
- More than 1100 at risk of losing their ability to perform instrumental ADLs.

Data from February 2011 to November 2014 was used, which can be a long time when it comes to age-related disability. Compared to people who had both hobbies and an *ikigai*, **having neither of these was associated with double the risk of mortality**, close to triple the risk of losing ADL abilities, and almost double the risk of losing IADL abilities!

Therefore, **hobbies and *ikigai* were linked to increased longevity and healthy life expectancy in older adults.**

This was not the only study that found a link between purpose in life and longevity. Another [study on 6000 adults](#) with a 14-year follow-up time found that **people who initially reported a strong purpose in life had a 15% lower risk of dying from any cause.**

Other research [found that](#) those who **described clear goals and purpose lived both longer and better than those who did not.** In fact, other “Blue Zone” cultures (areas with a high prevalence of centenarians) besides the Okinawans of Japan value purpose, with the Nicoyan (Costa Rica) people calling it *plan de vida*.

## **How to Find Your Own *Ikigai***

So how can you find your own *ikigai*, or *plan de vida*, if you haven't already? **A great way to start is by doing an internal inventory.**

Take a piece of paper, and for 20-30 minutes think of all your ideals, principles, standards, and morals, then think of your

physical, mental, and emotional talents, strengths, and abilities.

It can take a while, maybe even a couple of attempts, to get an idea of what you really want, but you know you're getting close if anything **brings out a strong emotional reaction**. And then...put your skills into action!

It's also important to **build relationships with people who can help you achieve your goals**. Overall, longevity is for everyone, and it turns out that some of the best ways to extend your life also improve its quality.

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