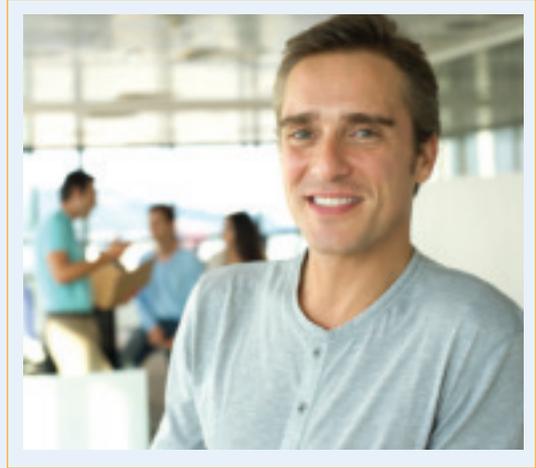


BLUE ZONES POWER 9 COMMUNITY

PARTICIPATE IN A SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY

Having a sense of belonging seems to be an important part of enjoying a long and healthy life. Blue Zones[®] researchers discovered that people who are the healthiest and who live the longest all seem to have a strong sense of belonging and purpose. **It's so important that it's one of the Power 9[®], which include common lifestyle habits of those living in the original Blue Zones areas helping them live longer, better.** For many, this comes from spiritual or religious practice.



ATTENDING A FAITH-BASED SERVICE OF YOUR CHOICE IS GOOD FOR YOU!

The simple act of regularly attending a religious service is a common thread among cultures with the longest life spans. It doesn't matter which faith you are; attending church, even just once a month, seems to have a positive effect on one's overall health and happiness.

A study in the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* discovered that those who attended regular religious services at least once per month had a longer life expectancy than those who did not. It seems that people who nourish their spiritual side lower their risk of heart disease, depression, and stress, while increasing their immunity.

Why is going to church so good for your health?

1. **Provides a Big, Social Network.** Friends are an important part of enjoying a healthy, happy life. People who attend church have a big social network and a regular meeting place. Weekly meetings with friends are a great way to talk, connect, relieve stress, and have a good time. It also means being there for others in their time of need. Participating in a religious community is a great way to connect, bond, and share life's ups and downs.
2. **Encourages Positive Behaviors.** People who attend church tend to be more physically active and may be less likely to indulge in unhealthy behaviors like excessive drinking, smoking, and using illegal drugs. Religious services offer a regularly scheduled time to slow down and reflect.
3. **Creates a Sanctuary in Time.** Taking a weekly break from the rigors of daily life is a great way to relieve stress and strengthen your social networks with loved ones. It offers a time to turn off the TV, not think about work or school, and spend time with the people who are important to you. It's a great way to down shift by taking some time for yourself to slow down and rejuvenate.
4. **Supports a Sense of Purpose.** Religion encourages positive behaviors and expectations. When people act in accordance with their beliefs and values, they feel good about themselves and are more likely to feel a sense of pride and purpose in their daily lives.

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Test Your Spiritual Savvy

Which activities are more likely to allow you to slow down and connect with your spiritual side?

- a. Eating dinner with loved ones
- b. Watching TV
- c. Hiking
- d. Doing homework or catching up on work
- e. Attending a religious service

The correct answers are: **a**, **c**, and **e**. Eating dinner with loved ones offers a time to reconnect with your family. Getting outside, whether you are gardening, hiking, biking or anything else, offers quiet time to reflect while enjoying the beauty of nature. Attending a religious service gives you a chance to rest, rejuvenate, and reconnect with friends and family.

Q & A: Ask the Expert

Q: I'm not really interested in organized religion. Is there a way to connect with my spiritual side without going to church?

A: You don't have to attend church to connect with your spiritual side, but you should set aside some time for yourself. Making time for your spiritual side creates a space for you to slow down. Practices like yoga or meditation can give you a break from the nonstop, internal chatter that goes on in the mind. Being active outside is also a great way to relieve stress and reconnect with your spiritual side.

TOP 5 WAYS TO ENGAGE YOUR SPIRITUAL SIDE

- 1 Get involved!** If you already belong to a church or religious group that meets regularly, get involved! Studies suggest that the more you participate, the greater the reward, and possibly the longer your life.
- 2 Go with an open mind.** You may find something you would like to be involved in, whether it's singing with a choir, connecting with others who have similar interests, or volunteering. Being part of a religious community can be a stress-reducing, healthy part of life.
- 3 Do something for someone else.** Sometimes the best way to take care of yourself is by taking care of someone else. When you help someone else, it takes the focus away from your own problems. Not only are you helping someone, but you have an opportunity to meet new friends, discover hidden skills, and enjoy a sense of purpose.
- 4 Take a walk.** Whether you walk to relax, for fitness or weight loss benefits, or just to connect with nature, your steps can lead to inner peace, mental focus, and spiritual awareness. In addition to being a great way to move naturally, walks can become reminders to live fully in each moment and to move forward with purpose and clarity.
- 5 Reconnect with yourself.** With all the time we spend plugged in, tuned in, or online, it's easy to become disconnected from our inner selves. Take some time each day to think about who you are and what your purpose is in the world. Figuring out what is truly important to you can help to lessen daily frustrations and stress.

Learn more about Power 9® Principles at bluezonesproject.com

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