

# Ikigai

**If you want to be happy and live longer, discover your ikigai – a reason to wake up in the morning.**

Okinawa, Japan is home to some of the longest-living people in the world. Their secret is ikigai. The Japanese word has two characters: 'iki' which means life, and 'gai,' or value. Finding your ikigai can be as simple as asking four basic questions:

1. What are your strengths? Think of what you do better than everyone else.
2. What does the world need? Imagine something you see that the world lacks.
3. What are your passions? Picture the things that you could do all day without stopping.
4. What can you earn a living doing? You have to make money from your craft, so how can you do that?

Your ikigai might take you a short time to discover, or it could take much longer. Once you find it, however, you may realize that you never want or need to retire. Aside from being mase up by the Germans, retirement is associated with an increased risk for health problems. Searching your ikigai is the perfect way to never retire and thus avoid deteriorating faster in your old age.

However, your ikigai doesn't *have to* be connected to your job. Your purpose may come from a hobby or your family relationships. **Do whatever you find gets you up in the morning, just make sure that you never give it up.**

Okinawans forced into retirement continue to stay active with their hobbies and in their community, which helps them live longer. Research has shown that the elderly people of Okinawa have remarkably lower rates of dementia and heart disease as a result of their purpose and activity level.

**Okinawan elders know a thing or two about well-being, and we should follow their advice if we want to live as long as they do.**

Seniors have so much wisdom to share with the world from their years of experience. Those of us that are young might sometimes pretend like we know everything, but we should learn a thing or two about life from the generations before us.

One tip from Okinawan centenarians is to worry as little as possible. It helps to slow down, take your time, and realize that you don't have to have it all figured out right away.

**Focus on enjoying life for what you have, instead of being afraid of what might go wrong.**

A great way to do this is to connect with everyone around you, even strangers. Okinawan old-timers suggest smiling and having an open-heart towards everybody you meet.

Your friendliness will help you develop many friendships throughout life. Okinawan elders recommend maintaining those relationships as well. When you become a grandparent your replacement of worry with friends may also help your grandchildren visit more often.

Japanese centenarians also endorse eating healthy, waking up early, and making sure you have enough movement throughout your day.

**A key component of staying healthy is to keep moving throughout the day, no matter how little.**

Residents of Okinawa suggest that you don't always need to play a sport or go running to be healthy. **Longevity and health are more about finding simple, consistent ways to move more through the day.**

Intensity may deter consistency, so Okinawans strive for simplicity in their forms of exercise. A walk around the neighborhood, day in the garden, or singing karaoke are just a few simple ways they maintain movement frequently.

Radio Taiso, a Japanese radio show, has helped Okinawans exercise for years. Large groups of Japanese tune into the station and listen to directions on how to exercise.

In the present day, most watch online or on the television, but the show still continues throughout the day in Japan. With simple exercises, like lifting your arms above your head and bringing them down again, Radio Taiso is an easy to repeat form of exercise for the Japanese.

Whether you find an exercise program like that or not, always make time for small, consistent amounts of movement in your day.