

## Longevity and Spirituality

Spirituality is that dimension of life that lifts us far beyond the limits of our physical bodies. Focusing on your *higher consciousness* can give your life a sense of peace and meaning. Live the life you were meant to live!

Medicine today has taught us that *depression, hostility, and loneliness* can shorten our life span, perhaps even more than smoking and obesity.

### Tap into Spirituality

Cultivate *love* for yourself, your body, your surroundings, and those around you. Treat yourself with *love and kindness* – and you will find that your body returns the favour.

Researchers have also begun to see the beneficial effects of *prayer* and other *spiritual practices* on health and healing.

Numerous studies have shown that *spiritual beliefs*, as well as attendance at a *church* or other place of worship, offers protection from many diseases, including heart disease, high blood pressure, colitis, and cancer. (These effects appear to be independent of one's beliefs or specific spiritual practice and are seen across races, cultures, and continents.)

A university study in 1995 looked at the factors influencing survival in a group of 232 elderly people having cardiac surgery. Those people who either found comfort in their faith, or who actively participated in organizations in their community, had three times the survival rate compared to those who didn't have these lifelines. Seniors who claimed both of these factors were 10 times as likely to survive! *Connection to others*, as well as the *comfort and trust that faith brought*, had a positive impact on survival.

Considering healing from a spiritual perspective suggests there is a *compassionate and loving wisdom and intelligence* in the universe (as well as *within* the individual) available for guidance, support, emotional healing, and even possible physical transformation. A strong *belief* in something like this often does bring about changes in the physical body.

Research is accumulating that confirms what many healers have known for centuries: our *minds, thoughts, prayers, and intentions* do have an impact on our bodies and can influence our environment as well.

## **Cultivate All-Encompassing Gratitude**

Studies have shown that people who experience *gratitude* tend to be healthier than those who don't feel grateful, and that being grateful changes your perception of life for the better. The *health benefits from experiencing gratitude* include increased happiness, less depression, the ability to forgive, and the desire to be more helpful.

## **Realize that *Attitude is Everything!***

In the end, longevity is probably best cultivated by creating a *positive attitude toward everything in our lives* – including our aging bodies, illnesses, and other challenges that we face. *Optimism* and *hope* pave the way for new ideas and paths to reveal themselves to us – they take us to places we would never have travelled on our own, revealing exactly what we need for personal growth and healing. Our state of mind is crucial to good outcomes.

**Source:** Notes excerpted from and based on Kandeel Judge, Maxine Barish-Wreden, and Karen Brees, *Secrets of Longevity: Discover the Keys to a Long and Happy Life* [“*The Complete Idiot’s Guide to . . .*” series] (New York: Penguin, 2008), 287-298.