

A Thematic Analysis of Aging in Blue Zone Regions: Lessons from Okinawa and the Nicoya Peninsula

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Abstract : Blue Zones are particular regions of the world with a high prevalence of centenarians who share common characteristics, lifestyles and environments. There are currently only five recognized Blue Zones, two of which include Okinawa, Japan and the Nicoya Peninsula in Costa Rica. Individuals living in these areas tend to have positive outlooks on life, utilize daily movement, rely on strong social support groups, and eat little to no processed foods. The current research sought to further understand how centenarians living in Okinawa and in the Nicoya Peninsula utilize Blue Zone lifestyle elements in their daily living habits. To accomplish this, the author traveled to both Okinawa and the Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica, and interviewed several centenarians, paying particular attention to lifestyle choices and their effects on the aging process. Thematic analysis was used to analyze interview responses, and several themes emerged, such as the importance of family, friends, faith/spirituality, mindfulness, nutrition and daily movement as key foundations to aging in healthy and productive ways. Suggestions for ways to implement these habits globally was also discussed.

Keywords : aging, blue zones, centenarians, nicoya peninsula, okinawa

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