

Sense of Purpose in Your Life Protects Your Health Too

While hedonists may get instant gratification from feelings of pleasure, it's those who have found a sense of purpose in their life that reap life's greatest benefits -- protection against poor health and better physical functioning.



Researchers confirmed this finding by interviewing a group of older women with the intent of evaluating both their emotional and physical well-being. The results showed that the women who had a sense of purpose in their life exhibited stronger physical functioning capabilities. The focus of the study was to find out if there was a link between good mental health and physical functioning.

The study consisted of 135 women between the ages of 61 to 91. The women were required to rate the following two types of healthy emotional well-being:

- Hedonic well-being: Feelings of joy or happiness brought upon by pleasurable experiences
- Eudaimonic well-being: A sense of purpose in life, healthy relationships and high self-esteem

Researchers were surprised to find that the women who claimed to have higher levels of eudaimonic well-being displayed signs of better health such as weighing less, lower levels of daily stress hormones, lower levels of inflammatory cytokines, (a contributor to arthritis), higher levels of HDL (the good cholesterol) and lower sugar levels in the blood. They were also shown to have better sleep habits such as sleeping longer.

Out of all of the above positive health effects, lower cholesterol levels was the only benefit that was found among the women who experienced solely hedonic well-being.

From these findings, researchers concluded that living with a sense of purpose should be added to the list of healthy living strategies such as eating healthy and exercising.

http://www.mercola.com/2004/sep/4/purpose_life.htm