

Purpose and Longevity Are Related, But Not in the Way You Might Think

5 MIN READ

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New research suggests purpose may not extend your lifespan, but it *does* improve overall well-being.

When you think of the most important factors in living a long, healthy life, what do you think of?

Did you say exercise and nutrition? Stress management? Sleep?

If you said any of those things, you'd be right. They're all important in boosting not just your lifespan, but your healthspan and the fullness of your life, too.

Those are the kinds of things we help you with all the time here at Super Age. We love diving into the science behind how the basics can help you live more boldly at any age.

But every once in a while, a different kind of research catches our eye. This is one of those times.

Let's talk about purpose and how it might help you live a longer, healthier life.

Does A Sense of Life Purpose Help You Live Longer?

There's lots of anecdotal support for the idea that having a sense of purpose helps you stay healthy. People talk all the time about how discovering—or remembering—their purpose makes them feel reinvigorated.

And is that so hard to believe?

How could someone who feels lost, directionless, or broken be truly healthy? How could someone who doesn't see meaning in life feel truly alive?

I can tell you from my own experience that without purpose, a pursuit of health and longevity feels hollow. I've been in this industry a long time, but I've only recently remembered my true calling and come to live in alignment with it. I feel alive again. I act with intention. I live boldly.

Purpose can change your life.

And it's not just something that people say. There's science behind the idea, too.

What the Research Says About Purpose and Health

For example, a 2024 **peer-reviewed study** showed that “purpose in life is a robust predictor of mortality”—even more so than life satisfaction, another factor that's been linked to mortality.

Researchers have linked a sense of purpose to a fascinatingly wide range of benefits:

- **Reduced risk of Alzheimer's disease and mild cognitive impairment**
- **Reduced risk of dementia**
- **Improved memory, executive function, and overall cognition**
- **Improved verbal fluency and episodic memory**
- **Protection against cognitive decline**
- **Better immune and inflammation biomarkers**

With all that evidence, it seems clear that having a strong sense of life purpose can play a huge role in keeping you happy, healthy, and strong as you age.

However, there might be a problem with that reasoning.

The Link Between Life Purpose and Longevity May Not Be That Simple

A fascinating **pre-print study** casts doubt on the seemingly straightforward relationship between purpose and health outcomes.

In short, its message is this: a stronger sense of purpose doesn't actually lead to better health outcomes. What really happens is that poorer health outcomes lead to a drop in purpose.

The authors say that further developing a person's purpose probably won't reduce mortality or their chances of chronic disease. Instead, a cancer diagnosis or another health decline would make it harder to maintain a sense of purpose.

This idea certainly makes sense. Maybe people feel strongly about their purpose until a decline in health makes it harder to pursue.

So what does this mean for those of us trying to age boldly and with intention? Where does purpose fit in?

A Healthier Way to Think About Life Purpose, Health, and Longevity

In the end, you have a great deal of control over both your sense of purpose *and* your health.

To continue living a life full of intention, keep revisiting your purpose. Do you feel like you have a strong grasp on what it is? Do you check in every once in a while to make sure your life is in alignment with it?

(Keep reading for a few questions that will help you find your purpose if you're feeling unsure of it.)

And, to make sure you can continue pursuing that purposeful life, keep investing in your health. Keep eating well, exercising, managing stress, and prioritizing sleep so you can stay connected to the purpose that drives you.

In the end, your life purpose and your health support each other. They work together to help you feeling healthy, strong, and intentional.

How to Find Your Life Purpose

Everyone's path to purpose is unique. Some people know from their youngest years. Others take decades to find it. And there's no single, proven way to find it. But there are lots of people who have spent decades studying it.

One of those people is Kendall Cotton Bronk, a researcher specializing in positive development and moral growth. The **Greater Good Science Center has a great write-up** on some of the questions she uses to guide explorations of purpose.

Here are a few to get you started:

1. **1 What do you care about?** If you could change anything about the world around you, what would it be—and why?
2. **2 What are your most important values?** What do they say about you as a person?
3. **3 Who do you admire?** Who are the people in your community that inspire you, and what is it about them that catches your attention?

There are infinite ways to find your purpose. These questions illuminate just one path that you might find helpful. If you're feeling lost, they could give you a place to start.

Keep Looking Forward

Research tells us that life purpose is associated with better health outcomes. Other research indicates that better health might just help us feel more attached to our purpose.

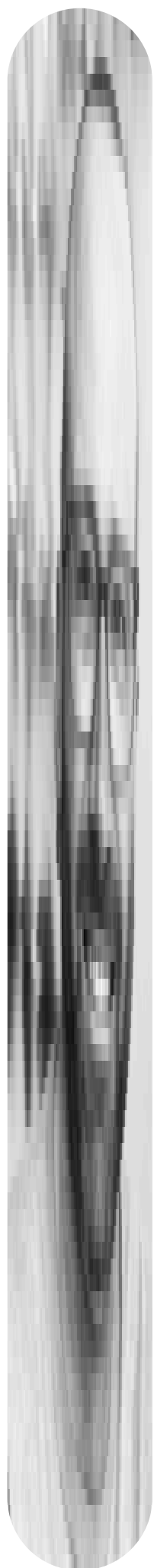
It's complicated.

In the end, the best thing we can do is pursue this one extraordinary life with passion, vigor, and direction.

Take steps to discover and align with your purpose. Protect your health and wellness, because they fuel your ability to make changes in the world. Age confidently, and make the world a better place while you do it.

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