

V - Vitality



You know vitality when you see it: the effervescent 75-year-old grandmother who swims two miles a day; the inspired florist whose passion for day lilies has you buying them by the dozen; the empathetic friend whose centered, calm demeanor seems to radiate inner peace. People with vitality overflow with that special something, and they stand out from the rest like shiny pennies.

All of which leads one to wonder: Why do some people have more vitality than others?

Since vitality is often broadcast via physical traits – sparkling eyes, radiant skin, an energetic demeanor – it’s tempting to chalk it all up to good health. But there’s more to vitality than robust physiology. Not all clinically healthy and ostensibly fit people seem particularly vital, after all. And some physically frail individuals still manage to emanate an extraordinary life force and joie de vivre.

To be sure, good health is a vitality enhancer, and healthy choices generally lead more directly to vitality than unhealthy ones. But in many ways, the physical body becomes a mere display case for vitality’s many treasures. Good physical health can help signify vitality – but it can’t deliver all of vitality’s goods.

So where do those goods come from, and where do they go? Do certain habits or circumstances make us more vulnerable to losing our vitality over time? And, if so, what’s the secret to sustaining our vitality – or to getting it back?

Vitality Links:

1. [Body/Brain](https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/category/body-brain/): <https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/category/body-brain/>
2. [Meditation](https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/category/meditation/): <https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/category/meditation/>
3. [Mindfulness](https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/category/mindfulness/): <https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/category/mindfulness/>



7 Ways to Enhance Your Vitality

A wholesome diet and regular exercise are the cornerstones of a healthy life. To take your vitality to a higher level, keep these tips in mind:

1. Get outside. The high-vitality elders that Dan Buettner studies in Okinawa, Costa Rica and other pockets of longevity enjoy an active life surrounded by nature. To learn how time spent outside can help sustain and energize you, read "Nature Quest" in the June 2006 archives.
2. Cultivate community. A lack of close relationships has been shown to weaken our immune systems and sap our vitality. Maintaining strong social ties with others improves many aspects of both health and happiness. So does volunteering. For more on the benefits of being part of a strong community, see "Community Matters."
3. Be a lifelong learner. More education leads to longer, healthier lives. A 2003 study published in the journal *Neurology* found an inverse relationship between how many years of formal education Alzheimer's patients have and how quickly they succumb to the disease.
4. Calm down. Chronic stress releases hormones that can damage cells, tissues and organ systems, all of which can shorten your life expectancy. Learn more in "Putting Stress in Its Place," available in the March 2007 archives.
5. Honor your promises. Each time you break a promise, whether it's to a loved one or to yourself, you lose a sense of connection with your own values. Keep your promises and you gain integrity and self-respect, two main ingredients for vitality.
6. Plug your "energy leaks." Notice where you are losing energy. Reevaluate lifeless jobs, negative relationships, poor eating habits, sedentary patterns and other parts of your life that drain your energy.
7. Don't skimp on sleep. Chronic sleep deprivation increases your odds of suffering from both heart disease and diabetes. And it reduces your immunity and your ability to cope productively with everyday challenges.

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