



Debra L. Sears

LIVE LONGER, LIVE BETTER AND LIVE HAPPIER...

The Love We Take is the Love We Make!

The New Year is a natural timeline to refresh our thoughts and self-improve. This may sound like a large task, but in reality it is a culmination of the “little things” that really add up and create a happier person inside. As a health insurance

agent for 36 years, I have seen and heard some phenomenal situations. I find those people who find balance in their lives live a longer, happier life. They have long term and short term planning; make goals and set priorities. In a sense they have a road map for their life.

The first thought that comes to my mind – be thankful for the people in our lives and the things that we have; they are very easily taken for granted. Mind, body and spirit need to be in sync. “Subjective well-being is a snapshot of how a person perceives their own happiness, peace, fulfillment, and life satisfaction.”

There are six secrets on how to be happy as identified by Dan Buettner’s *The Blue Zones*, one of my favorite references. Those six items are community, workplace, social life, financial life, home and self.

The communities that we live in (according to surveys of 146 countries) possess economic freedom, low unemployment rate, tolerance and quality of our government. The USA offers us the best of all of these as measured by many experts. In 2013, Des Moines was applauded by *Forbes*, *Business Journal* and *Kiplinger’s* for everything from our Farmers Market to our business climate, from our downtown to our quality of life. We continue to grow in capital projects, new jobs and businesses. We also possess a highly-skilled workforce and a very low cost of living...10% below the national average. In comparison, we have good tax rates, low crime rates and pleasing aesthetics...there is something for everyone.

Find happiness in your workplace. Short commutes, a job that engages our talents and keeps us challenged and a best friend at work are the three key ingredients of a happy work-life. To live on OPM (other people’s money) creates an internal void, underachievement and resentment that will eventually be noticed by all. What have you accomplished for *you*?

The happiest Americans spend an approximate 7 to 8 hours of social interaction per day. That is anything that appeals to you – not a computer or an iPhone but engaging yourself face to face with others. Laughter is essential – it has been proven to be equivalent to doubling your salary. Money does buy happiness but

only to a certain point. After our necessities have been met such as food, shelter, education, mobility and healthcare, we should spend our money on experiences and financial security. To have your priorities in order and live within our means is a must. If we need some coaching on that, the help is here for planning and allocating a healthy budget.

Home is a place where we are welcomed and that we welcome others. It is suggested that the happiest people have a single pet... perhaps “man’s best friend,” as it lowers stress hormones. Not a zoo, but rather a pet. Engage in hobbies, books, cooking, reduce the TV to an hour a day, do housework or tend a garden...simplify your life.



Knowing your sense of purpose is worth up to seven years of extra life expectancy. Articulate your purpose. Take time to know your values, strengths, talents, passions and share those gifts and in doing so you will in turn raise your well-being. Research shows that attending faith-based services four times per month will add 4 to 14 years of life expectancy. Always put your family first. Care for your parents – care for your children...the rewards are priceless.

To reinvent yourself, continue to invest in yourself - it cannot be given to you by others and in turn it cannot be taken away from you. Shine from within! *

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