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## The Well-Lived Life

A 102-Year-Old Doctor's Six Secrets to Health and Happiness at Every Age

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### Take-Aways

- Embrace health and happiness.
- Pursue your purpose to live well.
- Keep moving.
- Open yourself to love.
- Cultivate connections.
- Keep on learning.
- Let energy flow.
- It's never too late to start living well.

## Recommendation

In this inspiring, easy-to-read guide, Gladys McGarey – age 103, pioneering holistic physician and mother of six – distills the wisdom she gathered over ten decades of living well into six secrets for living with purpose and joy. These lessons include finding your “juice,” moving, loving, connecting, learning and embracing life. McGarey’s six ways of being – and accompanying exercises – offer you a fresh perspective, no matter your age.

## Summary

### Embrace health and happiness.

Each person’s purpose is one puzzle piece in the big picture of life. Being healthy and happy hinges on acknowledging your life force and place in the bigger scheme of things.

*“Your soul is on its own sacred mission, housed in your unique and brilliant body, and only you can direct that process.”*

To embrace and live life fully, consider the six lessons 103-year-old author Gladys McGarey learned by reflecting on a long life filled with caring for others.

### Pursue your purpose to live well.

Everyone has a “juice” – a reason to exist and a role to fulfill. Other names in the Western tradition for juice include motivation and purpose, and in Eastern traditions, *prana* and *chi*. When you use your juice, your life becomes more fulfilling.

Engage in activities that give you a sense of purpose. The value of purpose lies not in finding it but in seeking it. To identify your juice, step aside from daily activities to visualize your path ahead.

Every person is unique, with a particular role, like a jigsaw puzzle piece – everyone is part of a larger picture. Identify and honor your distinctive shape. Don’t try to reshape yourself to match someone else’s or their vision of your puzzle piece.

*“Our individual souls are like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Our purpose locks us together, creating something greater and more beautiful than any of us could achieve alone.”*

It’s OK – and even desirable – to have numerous sources of juice, but they can lead to burnout if they pull you in too many directions. To balance your life, enjoy activities without feeling pressure to excel at them or accomplish anything other than enjoyment.

What gives you juice evolves. If you need help finding your juice, put your hand over your heart and ask yourself what you love. Think about the times when you connected to a purpose, what made you happy as a child and what makes you happy in your current life. Summarize your thoughts in a word or a sketch to guide you as you seek your juice.

## Keep moving.

Feeling stuck and unable to activate your juice is normal. A person can be stuck physically, emotionally or psychologically. Sometimes, being stuck in one area can be a sign of issues in another.

*“Life itself is always in movement, so aligning with our life force means that we must always look for the flow within us.”*

Move around to get unstuck. Movement is essential to your physical, emotional and mental well-being. Lack of exercise makes a person tense, disrupts the system that protects the body from illness and alters hormones’ ability to maintain health and regulate emotions.

Look for and follow any movement. Notice children, who are naturally in constant motion. Eastern religion and medicine embrace movement. Even a stream clogged with debris keeps flowing as the water finds its way around and over obstacles.

Using something as simple as small motions to stimulate mental change fights depression. Movement can relieve physical pain as long as it doesn’t exacerbate existing injuries. Moving helps your joints, strengthens muscles, improves circulation and sharpens mental focus.

Grief and shame limit movement. Instead of letting an embarrassing situation immobilize you, laugh and move on. If you feel a sense of shame about an experience you regret or a change in your beliefs about right and wrong, acknowledge both, let them go and forgive yourself.

One way to let go is to hold out your hand, then sweep it back and downward while saying “Kutch par wa nay,” a Hindustani phrase meaning, “It doesn’t matter.”

When you grieve, focus on the love that causes you to care enough to grieve. Let grieving emotions flow through you and help others do the same by listening to them with an open heart.

## Open yourself to love.

When things are going badly, fear is anyone’s first reaction. People in tough situations must go beyond fear and open themselves to love. Love creates a positive feedback loop that leads to more love.

*“Love truly is the greatest medicine the world has ever known.”*

Many things that aren’t in your control will happen, but you can control your response to them. Choosing love over fear improves your life.

Love can play a significant role in healing your body and spirit. When your body is ill, engage your unconscious self to visualize lovingly helping your body shed the disease.

To love others, you must first love yourself. Engage your mind and spirit actively in caring for your body. Think of yourself being born and the angels rejoicing. Remember that you were born with a purpose and that your presence is a gift to others.

Deeply accepting love gives you hope and leads to a better future. You may experience difficulty accepting love, especially if people made you feel unlovable in the past. Recognize and accept that you are lovable. You might start to believe that by accepting love from animals. Once you learn to accept love, give love to others. Love everyone – even people you don't like.

Channel love into challenging situations. When adversity strikes, you may feel tempted to limit your love flow and go into fear or panic mode. But hard times are when people need love the most. To experience the healing effect of love, focus on something in yourself that needs healing. Allow its mental image to emerge, discern what the image is telling you to do, embrace it with love and give yourself a hug.

### **Cultivate connections.**

Accept support and support others by establishing a community integral to your well-being. As each person has an individual life force, communities have a life force their members give to and take from.

Unfortunately, many people today lack a sense of community. Some shy away from connecting with others because they fear being hurt or want to be in control. Don't worry about making sure everything is perfect. Seize the opportunity to share what life has taught you and welcome others to share their stories with you.

Be open, curious and kind. Look for “the friend within” each person you meet. Seek the nugget of their humanity that enables your connection. Set boundaries as needed. Don't ignore people who drain your juice, but be intentional about how much attention and energy you give them. In the long run, boundaries benefit everyone.

*“Creating good boundaries doesn't require us to keep people out; it requires us to allow the best parts of them in.”*

Connected people support each other. As a community member, trust others to come to your aid as you come to theirs.

To connect with others, listen. To strengthen your connections, call to mind those you connect with. Think of a time when your community supported you and when you supported others. Consider how and with whom you might strengthen bonds of caring to cultivate friendships. Call to mind the value of connection by periodically weaving your fingers together.

### **Keep learning.**

Become a “student of life.” Life is a series of small steps toward understanding the world and your place in it. Responding to difficulties with resistance is tempting, but try to accept challenges as an important part of life. The better response is to embrace life's messiness, be open to what life offers to teach you and how you can grow from each experience.

*“We live our best lives when we approach life with curiosity and a desire to learn from everything.”*

When you dream, pay attention to the substance and symbols of your dream and how it makes you feel. If you're trying to figure something out, ask for a dream to help you.

Consider pain and adversity as opportunities to explore new ways of doing things, learn about your needs and grow. For example, rather than staying steeped in pain and grief at a time of loss, cultivate a deeper understanding of the situation. Move from anger to seeing the change as an opportunity to choose a new direction in life. To convert challenges into opportunities for joy, recognize the difficulty of the situation, ask what you might learn from it, make room for joy and choose to be happy.

Keep looking for and embracing life's lessons as time goes on. Death is incomprehensible but teaches us about living well. Losses such as divorce offer new insights into ourselves, our relationships and our way of loving.

Learn from difficulty by thinking of an experience and what it taught you. Consider your current difficulty and what you could learn from it. Invite a dream to grant you insights about your struggle. Seek out and be grateful for what you can learn from your memories and your dreams.

### **Let energy flow.**

Energy is everywhere; you can't deplete it. To live well is to take in this energy and make the most of it, channeling it toward living, loving, finding and fulfilling your reason for being. Don't hoard your energy; instead, let it flow.

Live with a mind-set of abundance, not scarcity. Instead of fretting about whether you have sufficient time, money or other things, consider what you have plenty of and share that. The more energy and love you share, the more you have.

To tap into the wellspring of energy, focus on what you love that gives your life meaning. Also, get the rest you need. Recognize resting as an act of honor that cares for your body and soul – not a lack of activity.

Give life everything you have. If you thoughtfully direct your energy, life will replenish it as needed. Cultivate your juice, and don't dwell on past mistakes or negative thoughts. Focus on the aspects of your life that have momentum, not those at a standstill. Direct your energy to love and to contribute to your community. Listen to your inner voice and use trial and error to discern what's worth your energy.

If someone or something affects your energy negatively, let it go if appropriate. If not, shift your perception or attention to make it a positive force.

Don't try to save your energy if you feel you lack it. Determine what makes you feel alive and direct your limited energy toward that. Consider and work to correct any "false beliefs" you might harbor about taking risks or using resources. Change your habits to tap into your hidden reserves of energy.

### **It's never too late to start living well.**

You are never too old or too late to embrace life's lessons. Aging is an opportunity to become more of yourself. To age well, cultivate a "sense of wonder." Embrace opportunities to be surprised.

If you feel you've come to a task too late in the game, remember that you have been working at it for a long time behind the scenes – cultivating the conditions for it to grow and bloom. Be patient with yourself because growth and healing take time.

*“Each year that goes by connects us more to our purpose.”*

Continue expanding your horizons as you age – whether finding your voice, enjoying new relationships or learning something daily.

To maintain a sense of freshness and growth, make a 10-year plan. Include specific goals while leaving room for the unexpected and unplanned to emerge. Turn toward the fullness of life with joy and embrace it with gladness.

## About the Author

**Gladys McGarey** is a physician and mother of six. She provides life consultations and co-founded the American Holistic Medicine Association and the Academy of Parapsychology and Medicine.



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