

10 Habits of People Who Live to 100 | Part 2: Your Mind

English learning resource · EN

Full episode script · English

275 lines

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

I did the five habits.

All five?

All five.

For seven days.

And?

I took the stairs.

I carried the shopping.

I sat on the floor with my nephew.

I ate things my grandmother would recognise.

I went to bed at the same time every night, including Saturday.

That is an excellent week.

It was a perfect week.

So why do you look like that?

Because on Thursday evening, I was standing in the kitchen, eating a plate of lentils, feeling extremely healthy.

And?

And a voice in my head said, and all of this is for what, exactly?

Do you know what that question is?

Tell me it is not a problem.

It is not a problem.

It is habit number six.

Welcome to Your English Toolbox, the podcast that trains your English while you live your real life.

I am Martin.

And I am Julia.

This is the second half of our bonus conversation.



Ten habits of people who live to a hundred.

Last time, the first five.

The body.

Movement, muscle, food, sleep, and two subtractions.

And today, the other five.

The ones that live in your mind.

And one of them, we promised you, you are doing right now, while you listen.

So.

Habit six.

Have a reason to get up in the morning.

And I want to be careful with this one, because it sounds like a poster in an office.

It does.

So let us make it concrete.

In Okinawa, in Japan, there is a word people use for it.

Ikigai.

And in Nicoya, in Costa Rica, they say plan de vida.

Two places, ten thousand kilometres apart, two different languages, and the same idea.

A reason to get up.

In interviews and accounts from communities known for healthy ageing, older people are often asked what gives them a reason to get up in the morning.

And the striking thing is not always the answers.

It is how quickly some people answer.

No thinking, no searching.

They know.

And what are the answers?

Almost never enormous.

To teach my great-granddaughter to fish.

To keep the garden alive.

To open the shop, because people expect the shop to be open.

So it is not a mission.

It is not a mission.



It is something that is waiting for you tomorrow.

And what if somebody listening has no idea what theirs is?

Then the question is too big, and we should make it smaller.

Do not ask, what is my purpose.

Ask, what am I looking forward to this week?

And if the answer is nothing, that is not a personal failure.

That is information.

It means something needs to go in the calendar.

Habit seven.

Downshift every day.

To downshift.

It is what you do in a car when you go down a gear.

Less speed, more control.

In many communities studied for healthy ageing, daily life includes some kind of regular pause or slower ritual.

Not a holiday once a year.

Something regular.

A walk at the same time.

A nap.

Half an hour in the garden.

A coffee that you actually sit down for.

Praying, if you pray.

The point is not what it is.

The point is that stress is not something you remove from your life.

It is something you unload, regularly.

Like taking the rubbish out.

If you do it regularly, it is nothing.

If you do it once a month, you have a problem in your kitchen.

Now, I have a question, and I want an honest answer.

Oh no.

What is your daily downshift?



Well.

In the evening, I sit on the sofa.

Go on.

And I look at my phone.

And is that resting?

It feels like resting.

Martin.

Fine.

No.

What are you actually doing?

I am reading about a war.

Then I am comparing three washing machines I do not need.

Then I am reading an argument between two strangers about a football match I did not watch.

So your rest is the news, shopping and a fight.

When you say it out loud, it sounds like unpaid work.

It is unpaid work.

You have clocked in for somebody else's stress.

And the test is simple.

After twenty minutes of it, do you feel lighter or heavier?

If you feel heavier, it was not rest.

It was just sitting down while working.

Habit eight.

Keep learning something hard.

And this is the one I have been waiting for.

Your brain is not a box that fills up.

It is a living network that can keep adapting when you challenge it.

Researchers use the term cognitive reserve for the brain's ability to cope with change or damage.

Challenging learning may help support it, although scientists are still working out exactly how much late-life language learning contributes.

So how do you keep challenging that network?

Not only with puzzles that you are already good at.



With something genuinely difficult, that you are bad at, in public.

Something that makes you feel stupid for a while.

Something that makes you feel stupid for a while.

Learning an instrument.

Learning to dance.

Taking up chess at sixty.

Or.

Or.

Say it.

Or learning a language as an adult.

Which is what you are doing, right now, in your kitchen, with your headphones on.

Following a conversation in a second language asks your brain to do several things at once.

You are holding the sound, finding the meaning, predicting the next word, and trying not to translate everything.

And you thought this was a podcast about relationships and healthy habits.

You are doing habit number eight while we explain habit number eight.

Nobody told you it was on the list.

Nobody tells anybody.

And I want to say one more thing about this, because it matters.

Go on.

The difficulty is not necessarily a sign that it is going badly.

It can be the sign that you are working at the edge of what you can do.

Habit nine.

Belong to something that meets regularly.

And notice how specific that is.

Very specific.

Not have friends.

Not be sociable.

Belong to something with a calendar.

In Okinawa there is a tradition of small mutual-support groups.

They are called moai.



Some begin early in life and continue for decades, offering social, practical and sometimes financial support.

Through jobs, marriages, illnesses, money problems, all of it.

And most of us will never have exactly that.

But we can have the small version.

The choir on Tuesdays.

The five-a-side football on Thursdays.

The class, the walking group, the church, the book club that never reads the book.

And this connects to something we said in the second episode of the series.

The third place.

Not home, not work.

The place where the same faces appear again and again.

And the calendar does the work, not your personality.

That is the liberating part.

You do not have to be charming.

You have to keep turning up.

And habit ten.

Habit ten is the one at the top of the list.

Put your people first.

And if you have listened to this series, you already know why.

Because an eighty-year study followed seven hundred and twenty-four people from nineteen thirty-eight, and one of its clearest midlife patterns was that relationship satisfaction predicted later health remarkably well.

Even more clearly than cholesterol did in that comparison.

So habit ten is not a nice ending.

It is number one, and everything else is built on it.

Which means you can do the other nine perfectly and still live badly.

You can be the healthiest lonely person in the cemetery.

I want you to meet Dorothy.

Please.

Dorothy is eighty-eight, she lives in Bristol, and her husband died eleven years ago.

Tuesday, she sings in a choir.

Thursday, she reads stories to small children in the public library.



Sunday, she phones her sister, who is ninety-one and who she argues with every single week.

Monday evening, Italian class.

She started Italian at eighty-eight?

She started at eighty-four.

And she is terrible.

She says the teacher is very patient and everybody claps when she gets a verb right.

And that is habit eight.

That is habit eight, and she thinks it is just Mondays.

So that is purpose, learning, belonging.

And every single day, at four o'clock, she sits in the garden for one hour and does nothing.

The downshift.

The downshift.

And when people ask her what her secret is, she laughs at them.

What does she say?

She says, I have things on Tuesdays.

That might be the best sentence in this entire series.

I have things on Tuesdays.

Not I have a philosophy.

Not I have a plan.

I have things on Tuesdays.

Right.

Three sentences.

Listen, and repeat in the pause.

Sentence one, for purpose, and it is a better question than how are you.

What are you looking forward to this week?

Sentence two, for learning.

I have taken up something new.

I am terrible at it.

Sentence three, for belonging, and it is only four words.

Same time next week?



All three again.

What are you looking forward to this week?

I have taken up something new.

I am terrible at it.

Same time next week?

To take up something means to start a new activity or hobby.

And notice that the second sentence is not an apology.

It is an invitation.

People often warn to somebody who admits they are bad at something.

And sentence three is four words that create a ritual out of nothing.

Same time next week.

It is how a stranger becomes a Tuesday.

And our sentence of the day.

Ready?

A long life is not the goal.

A full one is.

A long life is not the goal.

A full one is.

One more time, with us.

A long life is not the goal.

A full one is.

So.

Ten habits.

In thirty seconds.

One.

Move all day, not for an hour.

Two.

Keep your muscle.

Three.

Eat mostly plants, and stop a little early.



Four.

Protect your sleep.

Five.

Do not smoke, and be honest about alcohol.

Six.

Have a reason to get up.

Seven.

Downshift every day.

Eight.

Keep learning something hard.

Nine.

Belong to something that meets regularly.

And ten.

Put your people first.

And if you put them in order of importance.

Number ten goes to the top.

Which is where we started at the beginning of this series.

Now, your task, and it is the last one.

Do not do ten things.

Choose one.

One habit, this week, small enough to be embarrassing.

One flight of stairs.

One Tuesday with something in it.

One phone call instead of a like.

And that is how this actually happens.

Not with a new life.

With a better Tuesday.

So that is the end of How to Live a Good Life.

Six conversations.

Four about the people, two about the body and the mind.



And after all of it, an eighty-year study, a hundred and twenty-three thousand people, and a woman in Bristol who sings on Tuesdays, the answer has not changed once.

It is people.

It was always people.

And if somebody came into your mind while you were listening.

You know what to do.

Everything from this episode, the transcript, vocabulary and practice, and the complete six-part series, is waiting for you at yourenglishtoolbox.com.

You can listen and read without registering, and a free student account gives you the downloadable PDFs, flashcards and progress tools.

Thank you for spending this time with us.

It has been a real pleasure.

Now go and put something in the diary.

See you in the next one.

