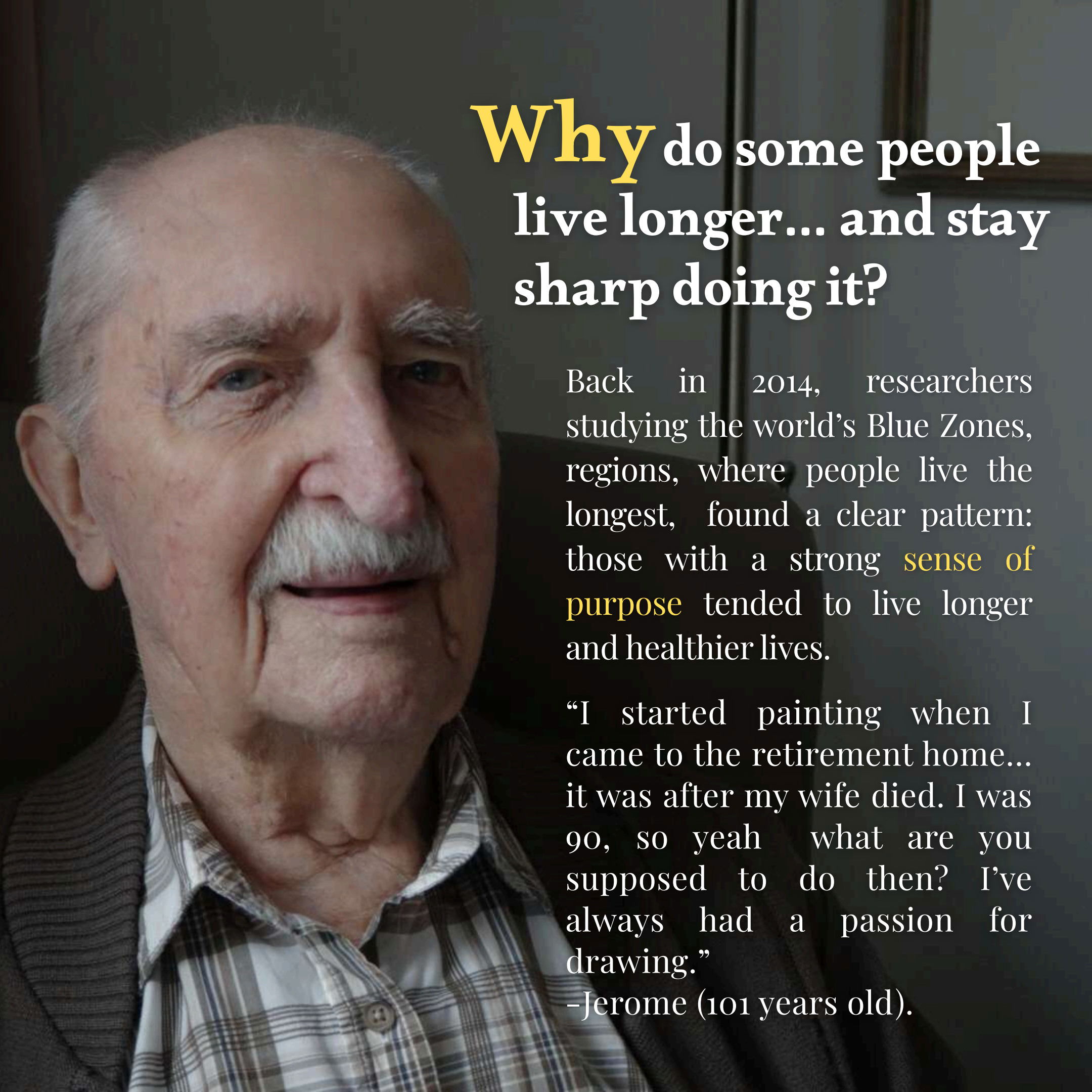




The Science of Purpose:

How Meaning in Life
Keeps You Living
Longer and Thinking
Clearer.



Why do some people live longer... and stay sharp doing it?

Back in 2014, researchers studying the world's Blue Zones, regions, where people live the longest, found a clear pattern: those with a strong **sense of purpose** tended to live longer and healthier lives.

“I started painting when I came to the retirement home... it was after my wife died. I was 90, so yeah what are you supposed to do then? I've always had a passion for drawing.”

–Jerome (101 years old).



Jerome's Painting Collection





Now, new research from UC Davis, adds a new layer to that story. Scientists discovered that having a sense of purpose doesn't just extend lifespan, it may also protect the brain, reducing the risk of dementia as we age.

"I had no television here, but I like to keep updated with the news, I read the newspaper every week, this is one of my hobbies."

—Joanna, (100 years old).

The 9 principles of the Blue zones for longevity



Move naturally

Stay active through daily life, not the gym.



Purpose

A reason to wake up every morning.



Down shift

Reduce stress, accept life.



80 % rule

Stop eating when 80% full.



Plant Slant

Eat mostly plants, beans, whole foods.



Wine at 5

Enjoy moderate alcohol.



Right tribe

Surround yourself with people who support your habits.



Love ones first

Family comes first, strong bonds matter.



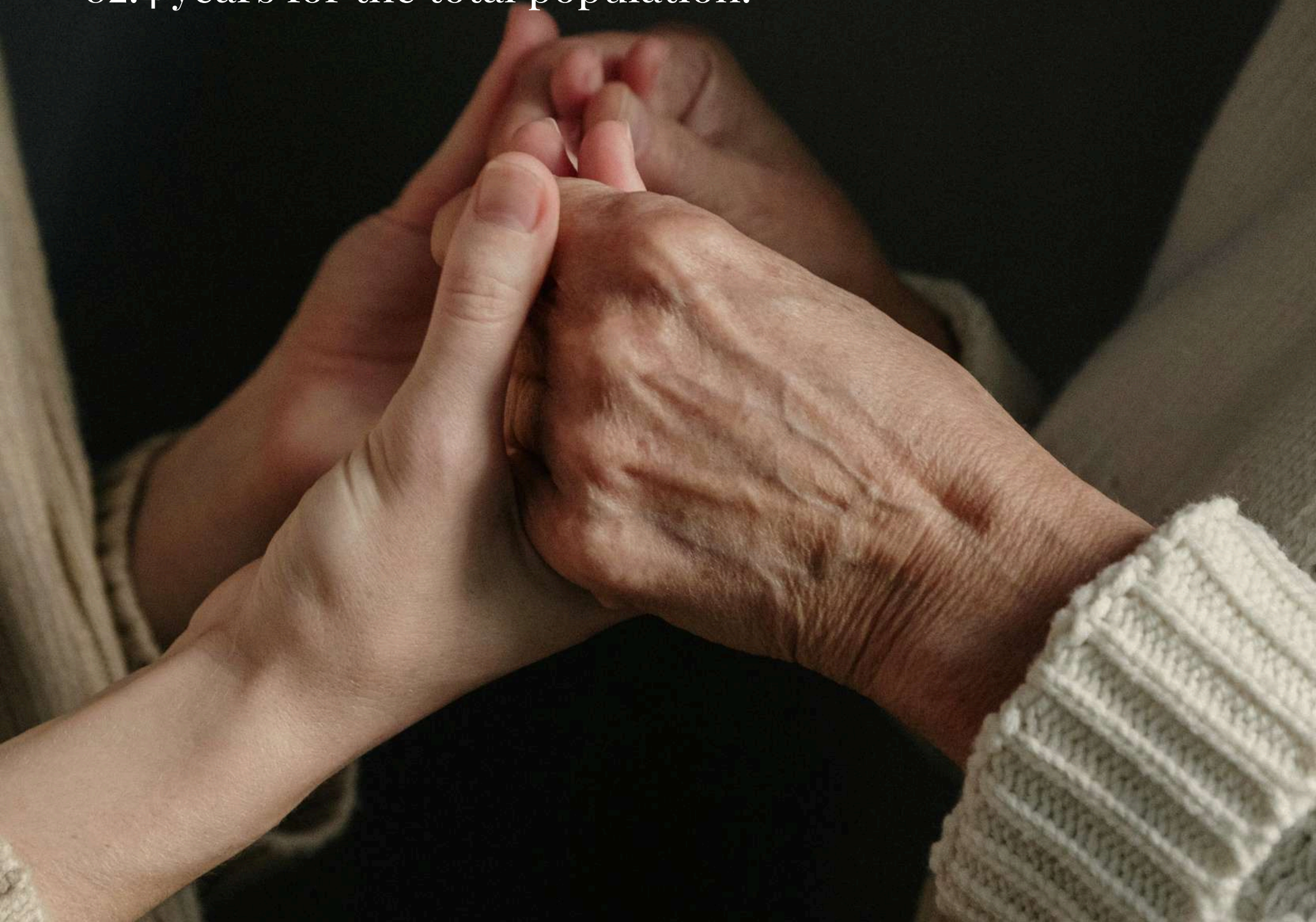
Belong

Connect with a spiritual community

Purpose is the key element, but scientists have discovered that people in the Blue Zones live longer thanks to **daily habits** that support the body, mind, and relationships.

What can Belgium's longevity achievers teach us about purpose?

In 2023, life expectancy at birth in Belgium was about 82.4 years for the total population.





Marcela (87), Dikkelvenne.

Sense of purpose: Love ones first

“ I always have people coming over. Right now I look forward to things, I have my grandchildren and great grandchildren, **I have things to do for them.** ”



“Just try to be a
good person...”

“Make your purpose in life being someone that people can go and talk to, be someone that has something to tell, but also make your purpose to be happy in life, because for me is my family but it doesn't have to be like this for everyone.”



Jerome, (101), Schoonaarde, Dendermonde.

**Sense of purpose: Down shift,
no stress.**

“ I go to sleep in time, and then I wake up. I don't overthink, I don't have to worry about anything. I just let everything happen, **que será, será** what comes will come. ”



(left) Roger (89), Destelbergen -
(right) Godelieve (87), Laarne

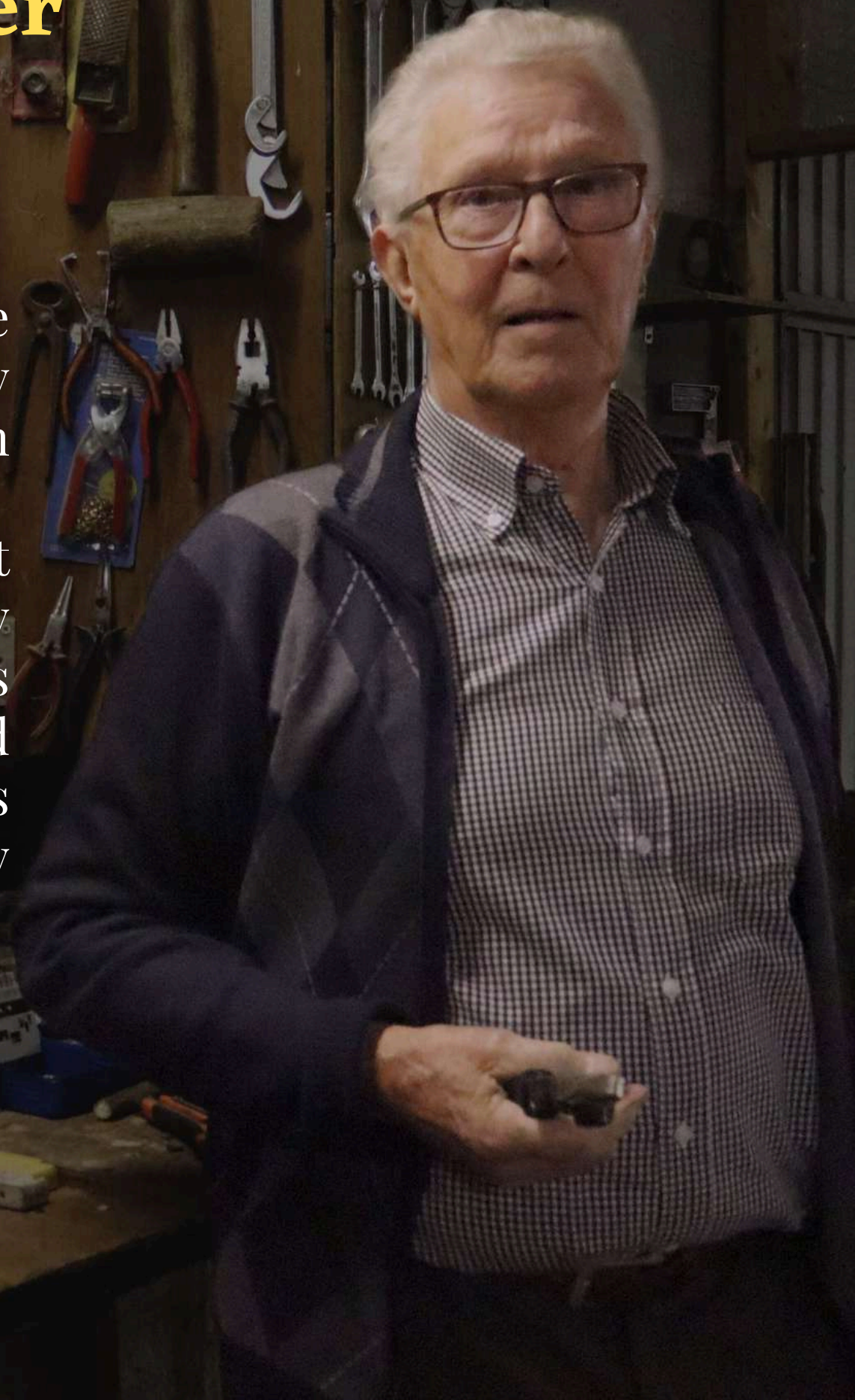
Sense of purpose: Right tribe + Moderation

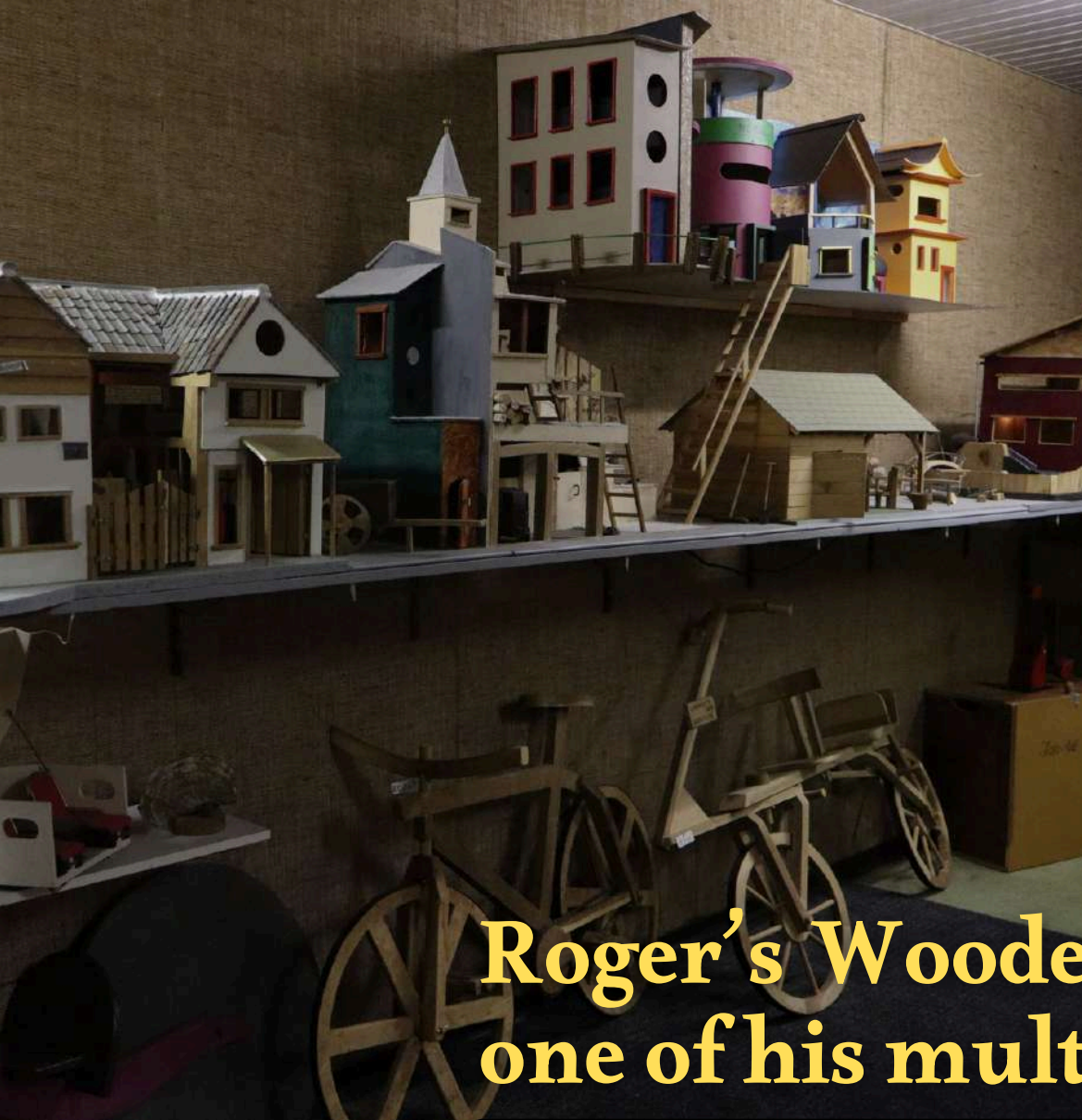
“We play cards with friends, go out for dinner, and enjoy time with family , the great-grandchildren bring us joy. We do what we love, stay calm, and every now and then, we like to enjoy an aperitif.”

“Take the matter into your own hands...”

“If you don’t get the chance to study, find your way yourself. I had to work when I was 14.

I was first in the class, but my father wanted money. My first job was selling ceramics until I was 30, then I started my own business. I always wanted to do things on my own. I worked from 14 until I retired at 65... 50 years!”





Roger's Wooden Miniature Houses, one of his multiple hobbies

"I always found pleasure in building things for other people. I built all these houses so my grandchildren and great-grandchildren could play."





Joanna (100), Gent

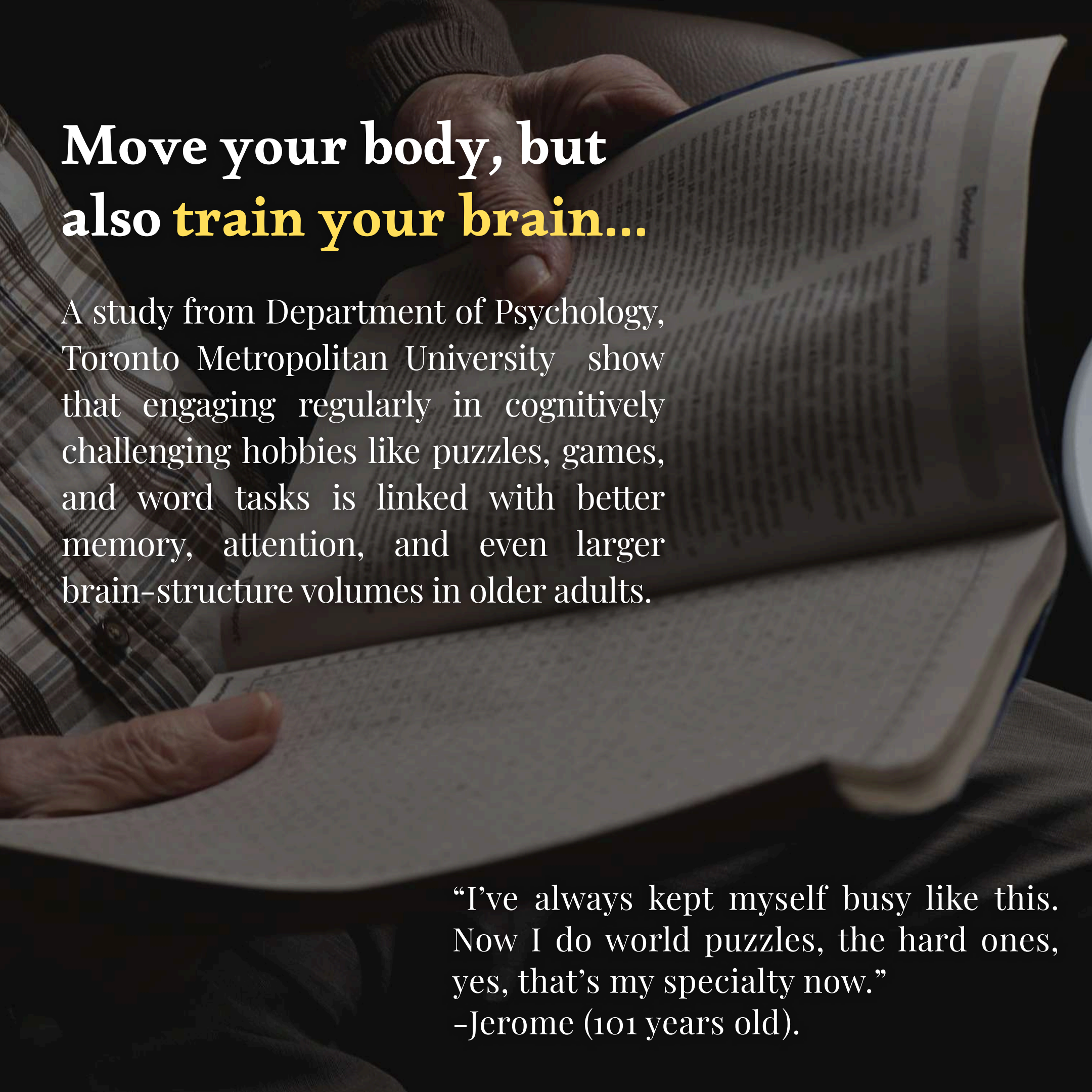
Sense of purpose: Belong

“It is my responsibility to
do this, to live life,
because it is the
Christian mission..”



**“It’s really
important to
stay strong
and keep
moving...”**

“We have a physiotherapist here who gives us exercises, and when the weather is nice, I like to go outside for a walk. I still walk at 100 years old, sometimes alone, always with my walker. It makes me feel safe.

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of an elderly person's hands holding an open book. The person is wearing a grey sweater and a plaid shirt. The book's pages are filled with text, and the lighting is soft, creating a warm, intellectual atmosphere.

Move your body, but also **train your brain...**

A study from Department of Psychology, Toronto Metropolitan University show that engaging regularly in cognitively challenging hobbies like puzzles, games, and word tasks is linked with better memory, attention, and even larger brain-structure volumes in older adults.

“I’ve always kept myself busy like this. Now I do word puzzles, the hard ones, yes, that’s my specialty now.”
–Jerome (101 years old).

Why Are These Scientific Advances in Longevity So Important?

Science keeps reminding us that living longer isn't just about medicine or genetics, **it's also about meaning.**

“People may be able to 'think' themselves into better health. Purpose in life is something we can nurture." It's never too early, or too late, to start thinking about what gives your life meaning.”

– Thomas Wingo,
Neurologist and co-author of UC Davis 2024 study.