

The healthiest people in the world

- A** How should we live, and what should we eat in order to live longer? These are questions that millions of people must have asked over the years. However, they are questions that few are in a position to answer. One group of people, however, who might be able to give us a clue about how to extend our lifespan are the Okinawans, the Japanese islanders who may be the healthiest people on the planet.
- B** You may well ask how anybody can say that one group of people is healthier than another. However, in the case of the Okinawans, the statistical evidence is overwhelming. As a proportion of the population, there are more people who are over 100 years old living on Okinawa than anywhere else in the world. And the incidence of cancer and heart disease in the population is minimal in comparison to countries like the United States.
- C** Studies have shown that the traditional Okinawan diet, which consists largely of fish and vegetables, must play a significant role in keeping the people healthy. However, there are lots of other island or coastal people who eat the same things as Okinawans, and their longevity is no greater

than that of most of us. It would seem that a more important reason for the islanders' long lifespans is the way they live their lives. The people have a traditional philosophy of life which emphasizes maintaining a positive, optimistic attitude at all times. They take the view that there is no need to worry about anything as everything happens for a reason, and, in the long run, things tend to turn out for the best.

- D** Having very close relationships could be a further reason for the Okinawans' longevity, although one of less significance than diet and attitude. They value family ties and meet friends and chat with them on a daily basis.
- E** As far as I'm concerned, it seems to be a good approach to life. Eat well, take it easy and make friends. We have a lot to learn from the Okinawans.

Remember!

Think about what you already know about the subject to help you understand the text better.

1 Read the text and choose the best answers.

- 1 What evidence does the writer give to prove that the Okinawans are the world's healthiest people?
 - a) They have much lower rates of cancer than many developed countries.
 - b) Heart disease is unknown on the island of Okinawa.
 - c) She says the clue is that they live on islands and hunt and fish.
 - d) There are fewer 100 year olds on Okinawa than in the USA.
- 2 What is notable about the traditional Okinawan diet?
 - a) They don't seem to eat much or any meat.
 - b) They eat a lot more fish than vegetables.
 - c) They only eat large fish with vegetables.
 - d) It is different from the diet on other islands.

2 Find expressions in the text that mean ...

- 1 explain to us. (paragraph A)

- 2 eventually. (paragraph C)

- 3 the final outcome is usually positive. (paragraph C)

- 4 close relationships in the family. (paragraph D)

- 5 in my opinion. (paragraph E)

3 Answer the questions in your own words.

- 1 What two pieces of statistical evidence does the writer give for the Okinawans being the healthiest people in the world?

- 2 What is the islanders' traditional philosophy of life?

