



# DEVELOP YOUR OWN VITAL ZONES

**Blue or vital zones are areas where people live, work, play and grow old in a happy, healthy environment.** You can do something for yourself or your loved ones (5m), your living and working environment (500 m) or for your city, region or the world (>10 km). Six pillars to build on.





**ASK QUESTIONS** THAT MAKE YOU HAPPY.



# PURPOSE

A reason to get up, feeling the energy flowing in your veins, looking forward to seeing people, feeling passionate about working on a project. That gives life colour. In places where lots of energetic 100-year-olds live, you see everyone taking part and contributing, engaging actively in work and play, taking care of those who need it, enjoying a drink, having plenty of social contact and being able to put setbacks into perspective.

 "The purpose of things is to give purpose to them."

Gloominess, excessive stress, too little sleep, burn-out and meaningless work are directly related to health and vitality. Purpose is one of the six pillars of a Vital Zone.

There's a lot you can do yourself or together with others. Choose what brings purpose. Volunteering, learning new things, less screen time, meditation, getting enough exercise, being in nature, using your talents, silence, spending time on interests such as music, sport or art, finding allies, helping others, laughing with neighbours, family or friends, sharing worries and grief, taking control of meaningful work, having attention and time for family and loved ones, being present, not worrying too much.





**MOVING KEEPS BODY AND MIND FIT.**



# MOVEMENT

**Getting enough movement into your day is important for your health and happiness. In places where many fit and healthy people live, you see 100-year-olds cycling, gardening, walking to the shops and playing games with neighbours. They've done it all their lives.**

We all know that a sedentary lifestyle is associated with diabetes, cardiovascular disease, premature death and obesity. Exercise combined with eating good, tasty food in moderation often makes you feel more energetic. Movement is one of the six pillars of a Vital Zone.

 **"No need for more sport, just start with less sitting still."**

Exercise can be light, such as washing dishes, washing the car, going to the shops, cleaning the bathroom, taking a lunchtime stroll, going to see colleagues in person rather than messaging, playing darts, gentle swimming, tai chi, painting, gardening or slow walking. More intense exercise might be running, trampolining, running up stairs, fast walking, cycling, playing football or horse riding.

Wondering how movement counts?  
Check out the MET values.







**MAKE IT EASY FOR YOURSELF TO MAKE HEALTHY DECISIONS.**



# GOOD FOOD

Life begins with good food. Good, tasty food is important for your health and happiness. In places where many fit and healthy 100-year-olds live, you will see tables with lots of vegetables, fruits and nuts, water or tea (no soft drinks), legumes, local vegetables, more fish and oil (unsaturated fat).

We all know that bad eating patterns can cause obesity, poor sleep and disease. Good food combined with exercise often makes you feel better. Good food is one of the six pillars of a Vital Zone.



“Let food be your medicine, not medicine your food.”

The trick is to eat tasty and healthy food. Plenty of fruit and vegetables, wholemeal products, skimmed and semi-skimmed dairy products, with moderate alcohol intake, a handful of unsalted nuts per day, less salt, two meat-free days, no smoking, 5 glasses of tap water per day and less or no sugar in drinks, no yo-yo dieting. Make it easy for you to eat healthier. Eat a varied diet and stop eating when you’re no more than 80% full, go grocery shopping on a full stomach, put fruit out in plain sight, use smaller plates, teach children to enjoy fruit and vegetables as snacks at a young age. And see the dietary advice of the [Netherlands Nutrition Centre Foundation](#) or the [Heart Foundation](#).






**GIVE WHAT YOU'RE MISSING.**



# MEANINGFUL WORK & INCOME

Meaningful work is good for others and for yourself. Do what matters and leave the rest. Creating a society where everyone can take part and feel useful. Income that provides sufficient scope for education, good food, accommodation, healthcare, exercise, internet and mobility. Not causing damage or passing negative effects on to later generations or other regions. No greed. By authorities and businesses. Meaningful work and income is one of the six pillars of a Vital Zone.

 "A wise man lives as much within the boundaries of his mind as his income."

There are things you can do as an individual, an employer or an organisation. Choose your own work and employer, use your autonomy and talents for a healthier and greener whole, divide attention between meaningful work and acceptance that stress and rubbish is all just part of it (paperwork, meetings, etc.), be a good colleague, be helpful to customers or local residents and communities. Continue to enjoy using your talents and resources.

The Vital Zone Institute has developed a special designation for employers and neighbourhoods with concrete goals and noticeable progress. It also offers training, education and coaching.





**WHEN YOU LOVE PEOPLE, YOU'RE NEVER ALONE.**



# BELONGING

**We can't exist without others. A safe environment in which you belong. You count and are valued just by being there. In places where many fit and healthy 100-year-olds live, you see a neighbourhood where people know each other, greet each other and come together. Grandparents and kids playing together. Having time for each other. Trusting each other. Talking to each other.**

Being unwelcome and not being seen makes people feel sad, some of them angry. Loneliness is a massive problem, not just for the elderly but for young people too. Belonging is one of the six pillars of a Vital Zone.

 **"A house becomes a home when it is shared with others."**

There are things you can do yourself or with others. Stopping for a chat in the street, not quarrelling over trees or gardens, finding out what someone can do and asking for it, join local initiatives like nextdoor, making a living room of the neighbourhood, setting up a local healthcare or energy cooperative, helping colleagues, listening for 50% of the time instead of talking, cleaning up the neighbourhood, maintaining your home, joining with others to support a good cause, as an organisation acknowledging people in the environment (nuisance, noise, light, emissions), being a good employer where employees and customers feel they belong.







Kees van de Veen

**DON'T WASTE TIME, THINGS AND TALENT.**



# HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The environment has a major impact on your health and opportunities. Clean air, fresh water, a healthy soil and access to nature. Green is good for your physical and mental health, and for the world's climate. Air pollution such as particulate matter literally takes months off your life. A healthy living and working environment is one of the six pillars of a Vital Zone.



"A developed country allows all its citizens to enjoy a free and healthy life in a safe environment."

You can do something yourself, with your neighbourhood or an organisation. Planting trees and cycling instead of driving reduces particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide and CO<sub>2</sub>. A healthy diet including local produce is also good for the environment. Buying less or sharing more. Getting together to clean up litter makes for a nicer neighbourhood. Solar panels and insulation are a step towards energy-neutral and help to cut costs. More greenery instead of paving creates a pleasant atmosphere, prevents heat stress and saves water. Healthy living prevents illness and medical expenses. Rivers and waterways stay cleaner with less pollution from agriculture and industry. We can only do this together.



## About Jim van den Beuken

Develops, leads and facilitates. Strengthens leadership. Simplifies complex tasks. Inspires creative tension. Director and co-founder of the Vital Zone Institute. Founder and former chairman of Planetree NL. Principal of Creative Power.

## About the Vital Zone Institute Foundation

Together with colleagues Annemieke Wiercx and Marlies Kampschreur and a tight-knit core of organisations, we help to create a healthier society. By bringing fresh perspectives, forging coalitions, providing training, acceleration teams and impact assessment, we act as a lever

## Want to dive deeper as a professional or as an organisation?

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your inquiry ([info@vitalzone.eu](mailto:info@vitalzone.eu))





# Vital Zone

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AND LIVING 3  
YEARS LONGER

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