

Take action to live better

MALAYSIANS are a thankful lot, and unlike other countries in the region, who focus on joy, this attitude is the main driver of optimism among us.

We tend to look for the positives in everyday situations and the power of gratitude goes a long way in helping us achieve this.

Having an optimistic outlook is also considered by Malaysians as the main key ingredient in contributing to a healthier, longer and better life.

This was the result of the Healthier Together study organised by insurance company AIA and conducted by global data insights company Kantar Group recently.

This research initiative began with in-depth interviews with over 80 experts from a broad spectrum of professional disciplines in Malaysia, Australia, China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Thailand.

Eight specific ingredients that are most influential in helping people live "healthier, longer, better lives" were identified. They are:

> **Have an optimistic outlook**

Look for the positive things in everyday situations, do not let negative events of the past affect the present, and find enjoyment in work.

> **Be active and engaged**

Be an active member of your wider community, remain socially

active with friends and family, and remain physically and mentally active.

> **Self-motivate**

Focus on your own personal goals, look for ways to make work/tasks/chores more engaging, and see setbacks as learning opportunities.

> **Understand yourself and your emotions**

Understand what motivates you in life, understand what is important to you in life, and understand your limits/strengths/weaknesses.

> **Feel a sense of independence**

Feel confident in identifying what is right for you, focus time and energy on things you can control, and be capable of improving your mental health.

> **Maintain quality relationships**

Focus on giving people your full attention, be open and honest with others, and seek out like-minded people who share similar interests.

> **Never stop learning or exploring**

Explore new ideas and engage with new things, challenge your own thinking, and be open to change.

> **Make time to recharge**

Create clear boundaries between work and personal time, and find ways to recharge your energy levels.

A total of 6,000 respondents, including 1,500 Malaysians, were

then asked to rate their performance across these criteria.

Only 15% of the respondents believed they were sufficiently adopting all eight ingredients.

This group also reported that the Covid-19 pandemic had less of a negative impact on their health and wellness efforts than the remaining 85%.

For Malaysians, the highest achievement was the adoption of seven out of the eight ingredients, which was claimed by 29% of the respondents.

Making time to recharge was the most common ingredient practised, with two-thirds of Malaysians adopting it.

This ingredient was also considered the easiest to achieve among all the respondents.

The most important ingredient by far was considered to be having an optimistic outlook, which was 2.3 times more common among the group of people that scored highest on the survey.

The fact that just under half of Malaysians (46%) reported achieving three or fewer ingredients, indicates that there is a gap between being aware of what helps us live healthier, longer and better lives, and taking the necessary actions to achieve it.

Malaysians also identified being active and engaged, and self-motivated, as the two ingredients most



Two-thirds of Malaysians make an effort to put aside time for recharging by doing things that bring them joy, like playing with their kids. – Filepic

of us need to adopt.

This is as only 41% of Malaysians reported being active and engaged, which includes practising mindfulness techniques and volunteering, while 43% are self-motivated, which primarily revolves around setting goals for Malaysians.

Said AIA group chief marketing officer Stuart A. Spencer: "The AIA purpose, which underpins everything we do, is to help people live 'Healthier, Longer, Better Lives'.

"It's therefore critical to gain a deep understanding of what people can actually do to achieve this, and how we can help them, beyond the obvious steps of exerci-

sing, eating healthily and getting sufficient sleep, particularly in the context of Covid-19."

AIA Bhd chief executive officer Ben Ng added: "In today's world, it is easy to access information that helps us understand what factors contribute to living a healthy life.

"However, there is an underlying gap between understanding what leads to a healthy life and knowing what actions help us elevate the way we approach our overall health and wellbeing."

Spencer noted that the results of the survey will now allow people to identify real and practical actions they can take in order to live better and healthier lives.