



# Combination of Health Concepts of Reason for Life, Ikigai Well-Being and Hinohara-Ism

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## Abstract

From medical and philosophical points of view, primary care (PC) medicine, psychosomatic medicine and integrative medicine (IM) have been prevalent. Among them, the concept of ikigai has attracted attention as well-being, reason for life or eudaimonia of ancient Greek word. Ikigai well-being in the mental health can be covered by the philosophy of Hinohara-ism by New Elderly Association (NEA). Ikigai can promote the sensation of self-awareness and autonomy. Ikigai shows relationship with cognitive frailty, social frailty, physical situation, depression, anxiety, stressful matter, and other psychological issues. Consequently, research on ikigai will contribute combined development of well-being, eudaimonia and Hinohara-ism.

**Keywords:** Ikigai well-being; Reason for life; Eudaimonia; Hinohara-ism; New Elderly Association (NEA)

## Commentary Article

From medical, psychosomatic and philosophical points of view, current medicine and medical practice have been developed over the world [1]. Some different situation and perspectives are present in Western and Eastern countries [2]. Author has been involved in patient-oriented medicine, such as primary care (PC) medicine, psychosomatic medicine, medical philosophy, integrative medicine (IM), music therapy (MT), and so on [3]. During various activities, one of the most supreme Japanese physicians, Dr. Shigeaki HINOHARA (1911-2017) and I have continued enlightenment activities such as PC, MT, life style-related disease and social development of New Elderly Association (NEA) [4]. These movement has been called as “Hinohara-ism” [5]. This philosophy and actual movement have derived from historical great doctors, Dr. Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) and Sir William Osler (1849-1919) [6].

On the other hand, mental health has become more necessary category for adequate management in our daily lives [7]. As to depression incidence, large difference has been observed between Asian and European countries. For the background, some cross-cultural can be compared associated with psychological

characteristics. Recent focus includes the concept of “ikigai” which is originally Japanese word [8]. It is closely related to the way of thinking, and is beneficial for solving various psychological problems. In this article, some perspectives of Hinohara-ism and “ikigai” will be described. Ikigai has been defined as an experiential and usual life phenomenon. It would relate to a person’s reason for existence or life purpose [9]. From some meta-analyses and longitudinal investigations, obtained evidence suggested that there was a protective beneficial point to ikigai, a positive relationship with improved physical health, and also an inverse correlation with all-cause mortality. From psychological point of view, ikigai seems to be crucial for developing one’s sensation of problem-solving skills, goal attainability and also self-understanding.

In the light of philosophical perspective, ikigai includes some fields which can promote the sensation of self-awareness and autonomy. This concept seems to be required for identifying the meaning for life in our daily life. There are four categories in the following: i) what you live, ii) what you are good at, iii) what you can be paid for, and iv) what the world is necessary for. The combination of these four fields may give an applicable suggestion for what most makes personal life for worth living [10]. Psychological frame of

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construction for the concept “ikigai” reflects the sensation of “reason for living”. Further, it shows some positive and beneficial health-related outcomes. In the clinical study for actual ikigai, self-reported results of ikigai and also depression, well-being, stress and anxiety were investigated [11]. The questionnaire of Ikigai-9 showed the validity associated with higher reliability by English version. However, there are language discrepancy between Japanese and English, and then it will be required to improve further understanding for detail ikigai questionnaire.

From various research on ikigai so far, positive relationship with improved longevity and physical health and negative relationship with all-cause mortality were found. In particular, ikigai seems to be linked to the factors as follows: i) decreased risk of disability in the elderly, ii) early recovery of knee surgery treatment, iii) increased response of immunity, iv) elevated odds of survival rate for acute myocardial infarction (AMI), v) better health-related QOL [12]. Moreover, ikigai has brought stronger beliefs and more health-promoting human behaviors, such as quitting smoking and continuing daily exercising [13]. Such decision can lead to overcoming several tough problems, including depression, anxiety, stressful matter, and other psychological issues [14].

In the light of the social axis, the concept of ikigai for Japanese elderly were investigated for 4 years [15]. As a result, increasing or maintaining social ties for other people contributed protective function against a reduction in ikigai feeling. It was combined with poor financial state and physical health condition. In recent report, ikigai was investigated for the influence level of social frailty, cognitive and physical factors [16]. The subjects were 116 community-dwelling elderly people. Multivariate analyses were conducted for ikigai, social frailty, cognition, falls, ADL, and then several living assessments were investigated. As a result, ikigai was related to cognitive frailty and physical situation. Especially, more than two overlapping factors of cognitive, social frailty, physical situation showed negative effects on ikigai value.

Concerning the word “ikigai”, it describes the meaning in life, which cannot be defined clearly. However, a helpful perspective has been observed [17]. In positive psychology, three factors of purpose, coherence and significance would be proposed. For each person, value and worth has been crucial, and the important word “eudaimonia” has been important which was transmitted from ancient Greece. It means the concept of successful and responsible daily life. The research for eudaimonia has been continued, and its significance would be involved in the previous experience in each person [17]. Such description is related with the current “ikigai”, that can be translated to purpose in life and/or reason for living [18].

From mentioned above, the common and crucial points are observed from Hinohara-ism and ikigai [19]. He established NEA, which has three themes as to love, to initiate and to endure, one mission as transmitting peace and love to children [20]. Further, it

has five goals, that are i) to continue a favorable lifestyle, ii) to hold an active role in society, iii) to maintain faith and hope, iv) to give loving care for people and express gratitude in daily life, v) to start or create novel activity, regardless of age [21].

Ikigai well-being means physical and psychological health, supposing the desirable culture status preferred by the society. It includes successful aging concept [22], and social participation and related functional abilities [23]. Such activities lead to elevated self-efficacy recognized as well-being component with social assignment and health-related quality of life (HRQoL) [24]. This seems to become the stream of “ikigai”. In summary, current article presented the combined concepts of reason for life, ikigai well-being and Hinohara-ism.

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## Conflict of Interest

The authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript. The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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