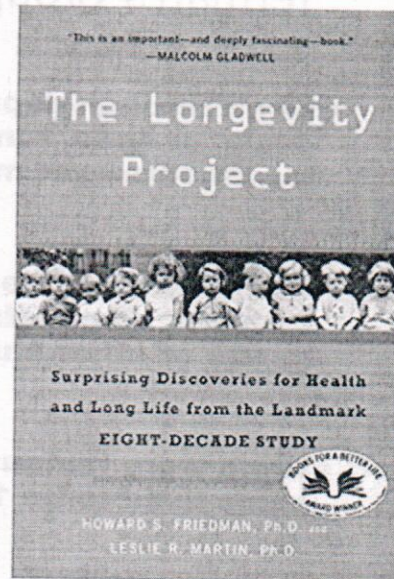


“Fact & Fiction of The Aging Mind & Body”

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The Longevity Project

uses one of the most famous studies in psychology to answer the question of who lives longest—and why.



The Terman Study

- **Dr. Lewis Terman, Stanford University Psychologist**
- **Started the project in 1921**
- **1500 children born around 1910**
- **Study was continued by other researchers and its conclusions were substantiated by other evidence based on research and retested using modern analytical measures and statistical reviews**

Terman's Group:

- **Lived through depression, war, prosperity—without designer spas, running shoes, fancy medical tests and treatments—yet many lived long, healthy lives.**
- **They were engineers, businesspeople, housewives, lawyers, administrators, writers, teachers and all layers of other blue & white collar workers.**
- **None were famous or super-rich; some died young and some lived to be 100**

The Terman Study/The Longevity Project

- **Studies delve into why some people thrive well into old age, while others fall ill and die prematurely**
- **Discovered many common health recommendations are ill-advised or simply wrong**
- **Set up more accurate guideposts to a longer, healthier life**

MYTHS?

- **The good die young**
- **Get married and you will live longer**
- **A happy wife is a happy life**
- **Take it easy and don't work so hard**
- **Religious people live longer**
- **Choose more vigorous forms of exercise, rather than hobbies like gardening, walking and cooking**
- **Worrying is bad for your health**

MYTHS?

- **Cheer up and live longer**
- **If you believe your are loved and cared for, you'll live longer**
- **If your child is the serious type, encourage more spontaneity & fun**
- **Give your children a head start in school-they will thrive in life**
- **You can live to be 100 years old, if you give up everything you like**

Who Stays Well?

Systematic individual differences in susceptibility to injury & disease

- **Personality**
- **Biological Differences**
- **Social Relations**
- **Stressful Challenges**
- **Availability of Resources**
- **Bad Luck**

Best Predictor of Longevity

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS--Those with the highest traits of conscientiousness in both childhood & adulthood lived the longest

- In children: prudent, persistent, well-mannered, organized, reliable, good work ethic
- In adults: thrifty, persistent, detail oriented, responsible, somewhat obsessive
- ***Not regarded as carefree...***

Conscientious people create healthy, long-life pathways for themselves

- Do more to protect their health
- Engage in fewer risky behaviors
- Biological predisposition (have different levels of certain chemicals in their brains, like serotonin)
- Gravitate into healthier situations and relationships

Sociability

- **Sociability Index:** tendency to prefer being around others and being involved in social activities
- **Sociability by itself** does not promote longer life, but having social ties emerges as critically important to long life—being the most popular or well-liked, does not portend longer life
- **Scientists:** move into stable jobs, have long-lasting marriages and work in a responsible manner—live longer
- **Non-scientists:** have more turmoil, less stable and more health-damaging careers and behaviors such as drinking, smoking, and other “dangers” of the moment

Social Support...the ties we have to others

- **Which aspects of social ties were prominent on the path to long life?** Maintaining an active social network & helping others
- **Those who cared for and helped their families, friends & neighbors, tended to live to old age**
- **Those who felt very loved and cared for, reported a sense of well-being, but this did not factor into living a long life**

How about the Cheery Types?

- Happy people are not necessarily healthy, they may be putting on a happy face to coverup or cope
- Less concerned about things that could go wrong & may have poorer habits. They may ignore symptoms, underestimate risks to health & fail to take precautions or follow medical advice.
- They tend to drink & smoke more and engage in thrilling activities such as aviation, racing, sailing, surfing, etc.
- Those described as “cheery, happy, care-free” died younger, not from cancer or heart disease—but rather—suicide, accident or homicide (men)

ATTITUDE relates to happiness in old age

- Pessimistic “Age is but a sorry traveling companion”
- Optimistic “I’m not over the hill, I’m on the back nine”
- Practical “Old minds are like old horses: you must exercise them if you want to keep them in working order”

Optimism...as it pertains to wellness

- Thinking good thoughts has never been shown to make a person well or effect a cure
- Studies promoting or reinforcing optimism in the sick show that the real cause of improvement is related to the fact that optimistic people are more willing to persist in their efforts, like pushing more fluids, taking in better nutrition, getting out of bed, taking pills on time, seeing the best doctors for the condition
- Optimism is generally best for coping with challenges in the short term, a trait that helps with medical emergencies and recoverable events.

Agreeable

- Friendly, cooperative, trusting and kind—easy to work with
- Agreeable, altruistic people are happier and tend to remain that way through life—with good social relationships and general good health
- Neutral impact on longevity

The Worriers

- **Tendency to worry—may be more tense and moody**
- **Women who were “worriers” in childhood and early adulthood, later reported being sicker and unhappier—were more likely to die younger**
- **Men who tended to be anxious, also tended to be more conscientious and preoccupied with bodily symptoms. They did more to keep themselves alive—and lived longer.**

Catastrophic Thinking

- **...see impending doom everywhere**
- **Bring trouble into their lives**
- **Tend to have only superficial relationships**
- **Die young—more likely due to accidents or violence, especially in men**

Education & Productivity

- Starting school a year earlier was associated with shorter life span
- Skipping grades was not associated with shorter lifespan (neutral impact)
- Higher education, leads to high incomes, but does not necessarily mean longer life
- Being more “*productive*” throughout life, with the tendency to continue to work, grow personally, be creative and “*do*” things, were better predictors of long life than the mere amount of education

Career Success

- Those with the most career success were the least likely to die young, and lived, on average 5 years longer than the least successful
- Generally, the rich live longer than the poor—those mired in poverty face a whole host of significant health and societal threats
- But why do the rich live longer than the middle class? Conscientiousness, is a strong predictor of longevity. Those who earn more money, in general, have greater levels of ambition, take on more responsibility, challenges, stress and heavier workloads—all of which, paradoxically, is helpful to long-term survival

Parental Divorce or Death

- Death of a parent during one's childhood had no measurable impact on life-span
- Death of a child or spouse is the most stressful event in a marriage; divorce ranks a close second
- Children of divorced parents died 5 years earlier on average—in fact—parental divorce during childhood was the single strongest social predictor of early death
- Children of divorced parents had a higher rate of divorce in their own marriages

Marriage

- Steadily married women live the longest of all groups
- Steadily married men live longer than single or divorced men
- Divorced women who do not remarry, live longer than women who do remarry
- Divorced men who remarry live longer than men who do not remarry
- Marital happiness as a predictor of later health and longevity: The most important predictor was the *husband's* marital happiness. Statically, a happy husband is good for the health and well-being of both the husband and wife

Exercise & Fitness

- Physically active children remain more physically active in adulthood
- Physical activity typically and significantly declines in later life for most
- Being active in middle and advancing age is a very important marker of predicting health and longevity

What Type of Exercise?

- Patterns of activity tend to persist with time. Trying to do activities that don't interest you won't last long
- Select activities that will fit well with preferences and lifestyle. Do things you really enjoy and can keep up (swimming, dancing, biking, hiking, etc)
- Don't jog if you don't like it. Marathon runners are not on the longevity list!

Mind Fitness

- **Keep your mind active at every age—especially over the age of 65!**
- **Stay productive, motivated and accomplishing goals. Stay employed, pursue new educational opportunities, set new goals, achieve new awards, make new contributions to society**
- **It was not the content, relaxed older people who lived the longest—it was those most engaged in pursuing more goals**

Religion

- **Sometimes dangerous to health**
- **In general religious involvement has many aspects that lead to good health—related to social connections and behavioral patterns, with avoidance of risky behaviors**
- **Meditative prayer or attending religious services, does not, in itself, equate to longer life**
- **Women who actively participate in faith-based or church associated social activities and volunteering, live the longest**
- **Not enough statistical data on men**

Pets

- Are pets a good substitute for human companionship?
- They can provide love, purpose and security
- If you actively walk, run, or work with a pet, it helps you; otherwise, there is no proven impact on longevity

The Women Have It.....

- Almost everywhere in the world:

Women outlive Men

**Why? It may come down to social relations—
with the ability to establish and maintain
deeper social connections**

MYTHS vs. FACTS

- The good die young—*false*
- Get married and you will live longer—*only if you stay married*
- A happy wife is a happy life—*statistically, a happy man means a healthy clan*
- Take it easy and don't work so hard—*false, you may have an easier, less-stressed life, but won't live longer*
- Religious people live longer—*true of women who socialize and volunteer in church-related activities*
- If you have hobbies like gardening, walking and playing croquet—you should take up more vigorous forms of exercise—*false, but keep active until you die!*

MYTHS vs. FACTS

- Worrying is bad for your health—*false, if not excessive, it may get you further in life and lead to longer life*
- Cheer up and live longer—*false, but positive attitude equates to being happier*
- If you believe you are loved and cared for, you'll live longer—*false, if you care for and help others, you'll live longer*
- Give your children a head start in school—*they will thrive in life—not necessarily*
- You can live to be 100 years old, if you give up everything you like--*false*

In Conclusion ...

There are things you can do to promote optimal, successful aging

- Change bad habits**
- Take health precautions more seriously**
- Exercise and stay active with things you are able and like to do**
- Stimulate you mind, take on new challenges**
- Seek more relationships**
- Help others & consider volunteering at Church!**

“Fact & Fiction on the Aging Mind & Body”

THANK YOU!