

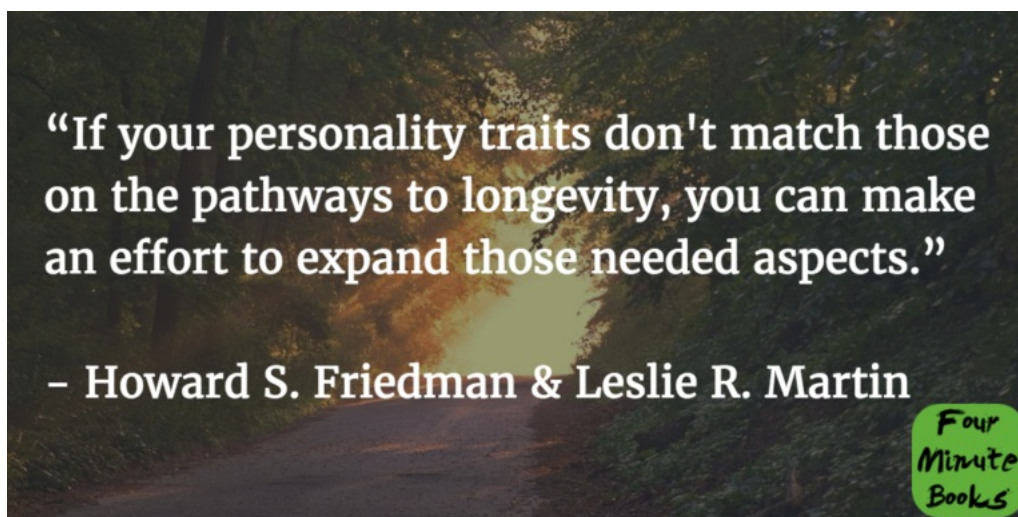
The Longevity Project Summary

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1-Sentence-Summary: *The Longevity Project shows you how you can live longer by analyzing the results from one of the world's longest-lasting studies and drawing surprising conclusions about the work ethic, happiness, love, marriage and religion of people who have lived to old age.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



Longevity is a fascinating topic. It's not only a matter of health, there's also an ethical aspect to it. We're already suffering from over-population (so much in fact, that we're trying to go to Mars), and not everyone *wants* to live forever – I don't think I do. But how old is old enough?

I myself would be more than grateful for anything that goes beyond 70, but I wouldn't mind living to be 100, as long as I'm mentally fit – like my great-grandma, who died in 2009 at 96 years old. What a life!

We mostly think about biology when considering how long we'll live, but interestingly, a lot of what allows you to live a long life has nothing to do with food and drink. Sure, that helps, but could it be that aging happens mostly in your head? That it's psychological?

In *The Longevity Project*, authors Howard S. Friedman and Leslie R. Martin argue so, based on the results of the world's longest-running study, the Genetic Studies of Genius, which is still running.

Here are 3 lessons about what it *really* takes to live to old age:

1. Being conscientious, thorough and having a sense of duty makes you live longer.
2. Men should get (and *stay*) married, for women it doesn't matter much.
3. Friends are more important than faith, but you can't fake them.

Lesson 1: You'll live longer if you start taking responsibility for your life, being conscientious and living with some discipline.

What kind of person are you? Would you describe yourself as diligent, organized, responsible, hard-working, serious and conscientious? Or rather easy-going, casual, fun, and maybe a bit chaotic?

As it turns out, the first group of people lives longer. The original creator of the study, Dr. Lewis Terman, examined how conscientious participants were both as children and around the age of 25. If people had always been responsible, thorough and careful, or at least changed their habits towards living more responsibly and in a goal-oriented way by their mid-20s, they tended to live well into old age.

It's not what most people want to hear, but **living a disciplined life makes sure you'll be around for longer**. If you think about it, it makes sense for three reasons:

1. Conscientious people are by definition risk-averse, and therefore tend to live healthier. They smoke less, drink less, take less drugs, exercise more, eat better, sleep more, drive more carefully, etc. – on average, of course.
2. Responsible people have higher levels of serotonin, a chemical that keeps your mood stable and balanced and makes you feel good, which allows you to make better decisions.
3. Since we surround ourselves with people who are like us, conscientious people usually have friends, co-workers, partners and jobs that support them and help them stay that way.

So if you've lived your life like a rollercoaster ride so far, maybe think a bit about what you really want and then decide if you want to make some changes to make sure you win in the long-term, not just today.

Lesson 2: If you're a guy, find a great woman to get (and stay) married to, if you're a girl, you're free to choose.

All of the men in the study who got married and, more importantly, stayed married throughout their life, lived to be at least 70 or older. Neither those, who got divorced or remarried observed the same effect. As it turns out, not all marriages are equally beneficial for a long life.

This is partly explained by wives helping their husbands in case of an illness or emergency and generally encouraging them to live healthier lives. However, some of the stressful consequences of a divorce never go away and remarrying doesn't change that.

Interestingly, there was hardly a difference in lifespan between women who stayed married and women who remained single after being divorced. This could be explained (and I'm totally guessing here), by women's huge biological "advantage" of becoming infertile after menopause,

which is something that makes the body decay a lot slower. Since men stay fertile all of their lives and go through more reproductive cycles, which strains the body.

So whatever the reason, while **men tend to live longer by getting married in general, for women it only makes a difference if their marriage is truly great** and helps them thrive beyond what they're capable of on their own.

Otherwise, there's no harm for them in staying single (contrary to popular belief), as long as they have one thing...

Lesson 3: Friends matter more than faith, as long as you don't just fake it on Facebook.

...friends. This is something we all need. Very much in fact. **Friends are even more important than faith and religion**, according to the authors. That's because the benefits that *do* come from being active in a religious community are mostly the ones that come from the social aspects of it. Praying alone isn't as healthy as organizing a spiritual book club.

They observed this by comparing men against women. Men value religion less on average, because they often give more attention to their families and careers. Yet, men with strong social circles lived just as long as women, who were very active in religious groups.

Whether you're religious or not, the one thing that's made clear is that **having a lot of friends and good social connections lets you live longer**.

One caveat though: You can't fake it. Just *feeling* like you have a lot of friends isn't the same. If you have 1,000 friends on Facebook, but no one to have meaningful conversations with over dinner, then those friends don't matter much, do they?

The Longevity Project Review

Yes. Yes, yes, yes! I loved the insights from *The Longevity Project*, because a.) they were *really* surprising (much less biology, than I expected, which is good, because our psychological attitude is much more in our own hands) and b.) being responsible makes you a winner – how cool is that? Of course I'll have to balance this confirmation of my own views with something grounded more in physical health, but still, a very re-assuring, yet refreshing read!

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What else can you learn from the blinks?

- What percentage of conscientiousness you have to move into to get its effects
- Why happiness isn't cheerfulness and how laughter doesn't necessarily make you live longer
- How big the impact of a divorce is on a child (and what it can do about it)
- What happens to people who are religious at first, but then move away from it
- The two main, differing paths to a long life

Who would I recommend The Longevity Project summary to?

The 25 year old college student, who's lived a party life so far, the 55 year old divorced woman, who's happy with her life and career, but has doubts whether remarrying wouldn't be "the right thing to do", and anyone who wants to live to be 100.