Welcome to Spotlight. I’m Anne Muir. And I’m Adam Navis. Spotlight uses a special English method of broadcasting. It is easier for people to understand, no matter where in the world they live. Pete Bernard is 91 years old. He is very active. His body and mind are still strong. He takes his dog on long walks. He cuts the grass at his house. He plants a small vegetable garden. He has even lived longer than 2 of his children. Have you ever wondered why some people live a long time, and other people do not? This is a question that many people ask. Many different scientists have studied very old people from all over the world. They are looking to see if these people have anything in common. For many years, scientists have agreed on a few basic things that influence long life. However, new research is finding that there are many another major influences on long life. Today’s Spotlight is on the keys to a long life. Since the beginning of time, people have desired to learn the mysteries of long life. But in the last 50 years, scientists have studied this subject even more. Scientists have completed thousands of studies. And they have tested hundreds of things - like diet, exercise, environment, values and more. All this scientific research has supported the idea that long life is always influenced by at least two major things - genetics and basic health care. It is no surprise that genetics are a major influence on how long a person lives. Some people’s bodies simply have particular advantages that help them live longer. They have parents and grandparents who lived long lives. And their parents have passed these positive genes to them. Howard Friedman is a health scientist. With his research partner, Leslie Martin, he wrote a book about living a long life. He says that genetics explain about 1/3 of why people live to an old age. The other major influence on long life is basic health care. Good food, clean water and medical care all help people live longer and healthier. For example, vaccine drugs prevent many serious diseases. A person who gets vaccines will have a better chance of avoiding those serious diseases, staying healthy, and living longer. The same thing is true if a person has clean water. For years, scientists have told us that good genes and good health care are the major reasons some people live longer than others. However, recently, scientists have identified another major influence on long life - personality and character. This means that the way a person thinks about life can affect how long that person lives! Scientists talk about four main personality or character qualities: a sense of purpose, staying active, helping others and being responsible. And all four of these things can influence how long you live. Many studies show that having a sense of purpose, or a reason for life, is important for living a long time. For example, in Okinawa, Japan there is a community with many people over the age of 100 years old. In Japan, there is an idea called ikigai or life purpose. Having ikigai, or a job to do in life, is very important. Scientists believe that ikigai is one of the reasons Okinawa has so many people over the age of 100. Another example of how purpose affects long life comes from religion. National Geographic wrote about this subject in a story called “The Secrets of Longevity”. It said that Christians who attended religious services, regularly added as much as 2 years to their life. Staying active is the second important personality quality for long life. This is not the same as doing difficult exercise. Instead, scientists found that it is most important to remain active in a natural way, doing something that you enjoy. Many people in the studies still worked to care for their own home and land. For example, Tonino Tola is from Salinus in the country, Sardinia. He is 75. Every day, he works on his farm. He even kills and prepares his family’s meat. The third personality quality that influences long life is helping people. When researching the effects of love on long life, scientists expected to find that people who felt loved would live longer. But this was not what they found. Feeling loved caused people to feel better. But it did not affect long life. However, the act of loving and caring for other people did make people live longer. Further research has confirmed that helping people is important! And it does not matter if a person is helping family, friends or other people. The final important personality quality is conscientiousness. Conscientious people are responsible and dependable. They plan for things. They think about the details. They do the right thing, even when it is hard or not very fun. And, they avoid taking risks. Of all the personality qualities scientists studied, conscientiousness showed the strongest link to living a long life. Some people believe that being conscientious means living a boring life. However, the opposite is true. Scientists found that the most conscientious people they studied had some of the most exciting and interesting lives. Scientists suggest that being dependable and hard-working created many wonderful chances. They could travel and do new things. Scientists have investigated the effects of many other qualities and behaviours on long life. However, there were many things that had no influence. For example, these things included: a good sense of humor, being very positive and playing with animals. These things all made people feel good. But they did not help people live longer. People cannot change their genetics. And it can be difficult to improve a whole community’s health care system. However, the results of this new research on aging are good news for everyone. They show that there are things each of us can do to help improve how long we live. We can live with a purpose, be active, help others, and act responsibly! What do you think? Are you surprised that personality can change how long we live? Is there something you plan to change to help yourself live a longer life? Share your thoughts on our website www.radioenglish.net. You can also email us at radio@radioenglish.net or leave a comment on our Facebook page. The writer of today's programme was Ann Wilds. The producer was Mark Drenth. The voices you heard were from the United States and the United Kingdom. You can listen to this program again, and read it, on the internet at www.radioenglish.net. This programme is called "The Keys to Long Life." We hope you can join us again for the next Spotlight program. Goodbye.