The Secrets to a Happy Life, From a Harvard Study


What does it take to live a good life?

Surveys show that most young adults believe that obtaining wealth and fame are keys to a happy life. But a long-running study out of Harvard suggests that one of the most important predictors of whether you age well and live a long and happy life is not the amount of money you amass or notoriety you receive. A much more important barometer of long term health and well-being is the strength of your relationships with family, friends and spouses.

amass 聚集

例: How had he amassed his fortune?
他是如何聚集起他的财富的?

notoriety 恶名: 声名狼藉

barometer 发展变化的指示计

例: In past presidential elections, Missouri has been a barometer of the rest of the country.
在过去的总统大选中，密苏里州一直是该国其余各州的晴雨表。

spouse 配偶

例: You and your spouse both have to sign this contract.
你和你的配偶都需要签这份合同。

These are some of the findings from the Harvard Study of Adult Development, a research project that since 1938 has closely tracked and examined the lives of more than 700 men and in some cases their spouses. The study has revealed some surprising – and some not so surprising – factors that determine whether people are likely to age happily and healthily, or descend into loneliness, sickness and mental decline.

age 变老，上年纪
She’s aging fast.

她老得很快。

descend into 落入

例：She descended into a cellar.

她走进地窖。

[4] The study’s current director, Robert Waldinger, outlined some of the more striking findings from the long-running project in a recent TED Talk that has garnered more than seven million views.

outline 概述

例：The mayor outlined his plan to clean up the town’s image.

市长概述了他清理整顿该市形象的计划。

striking 显著的; 不同寻常的

例：I personally find this one of the most striking findings in the report.

我认为这是这份报告最突出的一项结论。

“We publish our findings in academic journals that most people don’t read,” said Dr. Waldinger, a clinical professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. “And so we really wanted people to know that this study exists and that it has for 75 years. We’ve been funded by the government for so many years, and it’s important that more people know about this besides academics.”

[6] The study began in Boston in the 1930s with two very different groups of young men.

[7] In one case, a team of researchers decided to track Harvard college students through adulthood to see what factors played important roles in their growth and success. “They thought there was too much emphasis placed on pathology at the time and that it would be really useful to study people who were doing well in their young adult development,” Dr. Waldinger said. The study recruited 268 Harvard sophomores and followed them closely, with frequent interviews and health examinations. In recent years the study has also incorporated brain scans, blood draws and interviews with the subjects’ spouses and adult children.
track 跟踪

例：Track and evaluate your results.
跟踪和评估你的结果。

pathology 病理学

recruit 雇佣，招聘

例：They recruited a number of old teachers for the new school.
他们给这所新学校聘请了一些老教师。

sophomore 大学二年级生

At around the same time the study began, a Harvard Law School professor named Sheldon Glueck started to study young men from some of Boston’s poorest neighborhoods, including 456 who managed to avoid delinquency despite coming from troubled homes. Eventually the two groups were merged into one study.

delinquency 违法行为; 少年犯罪

例：He had no history of delinquency.
他没有犯罪记录。

merged into 融合

例：Three bureaus have merged into two.
三个局合并成两个局。

Over the decades, the men have gone into all walks of life. They’ve become lawyers, doctors, businessmen and — in the case of one Harvard student named John F. Kennedy — president of the United States. Others went down different paths. Some became alcoholics, had disappointing careers or descended into mental illness. Those who remain alive today are in their 90s.

Through the years, the study has produced many notable findings. It showed, for example, that to age well physically, the single most important thing you could do was to avoid smoking. It discovered that aging liberals had longer and more active sex lives than conservatives. It found that alcohol was the primary cause of
divorce among men in the study, and that alcohol abuse often preceded depression (rather than the other way around).

notable 值得注意的; 有趣的

例: These are only a few notable cases.
这些只是少有的值得注意的案例。

precede 先于，在...之前

例: M precedes N in the alphabet.
在字母表上M在N的前面。

[11] The study has gone through several directors. Dr. Waldinger, who took over in 2003, is its fourth. He expanded the study so it focused not just on the men but also on their wives and children. The researchers began videotaping the couples in their homes, studying their interactions, and interviewing them separately about nearly every facet of their lives, even day-to-day spats.

facet 方面

例: Being a well-paid business woman is only one facet of her life.
高薪阶层职业妇女的身份只是她生活的一个方面。

spat 口角，小争吵

[12] As the researchers looked at the factors throughout the years that strongly influenced health and well-being, they found that relationships with friends, and especially spouses, were a major one. The people in the strongest relationships were protected against chronic disease, mental illness and memory decline – even if those relationships had many ups and downs.

chronic 慢性的

例: Who is most at risk for chronic disease?
什么人患慢性疾病的风险最大?
“Those good relationships don’t have to be smooth all the time,” Dr. Waldinger said. “Some of our octogenarian couples could bicker day in and day out. But as long as they felt that they could really count on the other when the going got tough, those arguments didn’t take a toll on their memories.”

octogenarian 八十岁到八十九岁的人

bicker 争吵，发生口角

例：The two were always bickering.
两人总是争吵不休。

day in and day out 夜以继日，天天

例：Imagine, doing something for a living you have a passion for day in and day out.
设想一天到晚，做你有热情的工作。

count on 指望：依靠

We are counting on your cooperation.
我们在期待你的合作。

take a toll on 造成伤害

chronic worry may take a toll on our hearts.
长期的烦恼会对我们的心脏造成伤害。

Dr. Waldinger found a similar pattern among relationships outside the home. The people who sought to replace old colleagues with new friends after retiring were happier and healthier than those who left work and placed less emphasis on maintaining strong social networks.

“Over and over in these 75 years,” Dr. Waldinger said, “our study has shown that the people who fared the best were the people who leaned into relationships with family, with friends and with community.”

fare 进展

例：He fared well on his trip.
他旅途顺利。
Dr. Waldinger acknowledged that the research showed a correlation, not necessarily causation. Another possibility is that people who are healthier and happier to begin with are simply more likely to make and maintain relationships, whereas those who are sicker gradually become more socially isolated or end up in bad relationships.

begin with 以...开始

例：The English alphabet begins with A.
英语字母表的第一个字母是A。

end up in 以...为结局

例：Every time they went dancing they ended up in a bad mood.
每次他们去跳舞，到头来总是扫兴而归。

But he said that by following the subjects for many decades and comparing the state of their health and their relationships early on, he was fairly confident that strong social bonds are a causal role in long-term health and well-being.

So what concrete actions does he recommend?

“The possibilities are endless,” he said. “Something as simple as replacing screen time with people time, or livening up a stale relationship by doing something new together, long walks or date nights. Reach out to that family member you haven’t spoken to in years — because those all-too-common family feuds take a terrible toll on the people who hold the grudges.”

liven up 变得更有生气; 使...更有生气

例：How could we decorate the room to liven it up?
我们怎样才能把这房间装饰得更有生气呢?

reach out 把手伸向，接触

例：We should be confident enough to reach out to them.
所以我们要有足够的自信，和他们接触。
He appears to have a grudge against certain players.

他好像对某些选手有积怨。

词汇

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grudge 积怨

重点句子

1. A much more important barometer of long term health and well-being is the strength of your relationships with family, friends and spouses.

对于长期的健康和幸福来说，更重要的一个“晴雨表”是你与家人，朋友，配偶关系的紧密程度。

2. A team of researchers decided to track Harvard college students through adulthood to see what factors played important roles in their growth and success.

一队研究人员决定追踪哈佛大学的学生．看他们在成年的过程中，什么样的因素对于他们的成长和成功起到了至关重要的作用。

3. Over the decades, the men have gone into all walks of life.

几十年里，这些人从事了各行各业。
4. It found that alcohol was the primary cause of divorce among men in the study, and that alcohol abuse often preceded depression.

研究发现，酗酒通常是导致男性离婚的主要原因，而且酗酒之后通常伴随着抑郁。

5. As the researchers looked at the factors throughout the years that strongly influenced health and well-being, they found that relationships with friends, and especially spouses, were a major one.

研究人员通过这些年的观察发现，在影响人们健康和幸福的因素当中，与朋友之间的关系，尤其是和配偶的关系是主要因素。

6. The people who sought to replace old colleagues with new friends after retiring were happier and healthier than those who left work and placed less emphasis on maintaining strong social networks.

那些退休之后会试着用新朋友代替老同事的人通常会更幸福也更健康，而那些离开工作岗位之后就不在维持社会关系的人则没有那么幸福。

7. Dr. Waldinger acknowledged that the research showed a correlation, not necessarily causation.

Waldinger博士承认，这项研究结果揭示一些相关性，但并不是必然的因果关系。

8. Something as simple as replacing screen time with people time, or livening up a stale relationship by doing something new together, long walks or date nights.

一些很简单的事情，比如上看会屏幕，多和周围的人交流，或者一起做一些新的事情，来让陈旧的关系重新焕发活力，比如长时间的散步或者约会之夜。