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## To Live Longer, Stay Active, Calm and Organized

By Joene Hendry

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - A 50-year long study suggests that men and women who are active, emotionally calm, and organized, may live longer than people with less positive personality traits such as anxiousness, anger, or fearfulness.

Striving for emotional stability and a conscientious and active lifestyle "can reduce health risks, increase life satisfaction, and significantly extend life," Dr. Antonio Terracciano told Reuters Health.

Terracciano, from the National Institute on Aging, a division of the National Institutes of Health, in Baltimore, Maryland, and colleagues assessed personality traits among 2359 generally healthy people who, in 1958, enrolled in the Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging.

The researchers used these data, collected when participants were between 17 and 98 years old, to assess links between specific personality traits and the lifespan of the 943 participants who died during the 50-year study.

Their findings, published in the journal *Psychosomatic Medicine*, show men and women who scored above average in measures of general activity, emotional stability, or conscientiousness lived on average 2 to 3 years longer than those who scored below average.

These findings indicate that people who are more active and energetic, less likely to become angry or anxious (emotionally stable), and are better informed, disciplined, organized, and resourceful (conscientious) tend to live longer.

Among women, higher assertiveness was also linked to lower risk of death.

Links between personality traits and longevity were independent from those of two major health risk factors -- cigarette smoking and obesity -- the researchers report.

Furthermore, among participants who died of cardiovascular diseases, the most significant predictors of death were traits of emotional instability such as anxiousness, depression, vulnerability, and anger.

These findings add to the growing body of knowledge that indicates "enduring cognitive, emotional, and behavioral tendencies (personality traits) have significant influence on health and longevity," Terracciano said.

**SOURCE:** *Psychosomatic Medicine*, July/August 2008.



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