

## **To Live Longer Remain Active and Calm**

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," says Dr. Antonio Terracciano, researcher at the National Institute on Aging.

He and his 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. 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. It seems those who remain more active and calm not only live longer but also have a higher level of life satisfaction and better health," Terracciano said.

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