

Choose a massive event in your life or a fictional character. Write notes, ensuring you'll be able to describe it for 90 seconds.

- Give me the context, when did this happen, what was going on in your life at that point.
- Okay, perfect, now tell me about what happened - the facts, the chronology etc.
- Follow up question about the facts that shows you're paying attention.
- How did they feel?
- Follow up question about the feelings
- And has your opinion changed in subsequent time
- Wow thanks so much for sharing. (super sincere)

0:12 What keeps us healthy and happy

0:15 as we go through life?

0:18 If you were going to invest now

0:21 in your future best self,

0:23 where would you put your time and your energy?

0:27 There was a recent survey of millennials

0:29 asking them what their most important life goals were,

0:34 and over 80 percent said

0:36 that a major life goal for them was to get rich.

0:40 And another 50 percent of those same young adults

0:45 said that another major life goal

0:47 was to become famous.

0:50 (Laughter)

0:52 And we're constantly told to lean in to work, to push harder

0:58 and achieve more.

1:00 We're given the impression that these are the things that we need to go after

1:04 in order to have a good life.

1:06 Pictures of entire lives,

1:08 of the choices that people make and how those choices work out for them,

1:13 those pictures are almost impossible to get.

1:18 Most of what we know about human life

1:21 we know from asking people to remember the past,

1:24 and as we know, hindsight is anything but 20/20.

1:29 We forget vast amounts of what happens to us in life,

1:33 and sometimes memory is downright creative.

1:36 But what if we could watch entire lives

1:41 as they unfold through time?

1:44 What if we could study people from the time that they were teenagers

1:48 all the way into old age

1:50 to see what really keeps people happy and healthy?

1:55 We did that.

1:57 The Harvard Study of Adult Development

1:59 may be the longest study of adult life that's ever been done.

2:05 For 75 years, we've tracked the lives of 724 men,

2:13 year after year, asking about their work, their home lives, their health,

2:17 and of course asking all along the way without knowing how their life stories  
2:22 were going to turn out.  
2:25 Studies like this are exceedingly rare.  
2:28 Almost all projects of this kind fall apart within a decade  
2:33 because too many people drop out of the study,  
2:36 or funding for the research dries up,  
2:39 or the researchers get distracted,  
2:41 or they die, and nobody moves the ball further down the field.  
2:46 But through a combination of luck  
2:48 and the persistence of several generations of researchers,  
2:52 this study has survived.  
2:54 About 60 of our original 724 men  
2:59 are still alive,  
3:00 still participating in the study,  
3:02 most of them in their 90s.  
3:05 And we are now beginning to study  
3:07 the more than 2,000 children of these men.  
3:11 And I'm the fourth director of the study.  
3:15 Since 1938, we've tracked the lives of two groups of men.  
3:20 The first group started in the study  
3:22 when they were sophomores at Harvard College.  
3:25 They all finished college during World War II,  
3:27 and then most went off to serve in the war.  
3:31 And the second group that we've followed  
3:33 was a group of boys from Boston's poorest neighborhoods,  
3:37 boys who were chosen for the study  
3:39 specifically because they were from some of the most troubled  
3:43 and disadvantaged families  
3:44 in the Boston of the 1930s.  
3:47 Most lived in tenements, many without hot and cold running water.  
3:54 When they entered the study,  
3:56 all of these teenagers were interviewed.  
3:59 They were given medical exams.  
4:01 We went to their homes and we interviewed their parents.  
4:05 And then these teenagers grew up into adults  
4:07 who entered all walks of life.  
4:10 They became factory workers and lawyers and bricklayers and doctors,  
4:16 one President of the United States.  
4:20 Some developed alcoholism. A few developed schizophrenia.  
4:25 Some climbed the social ladder  
4:27 from the bottom all the way to the very top,  
4:30 and some made that journey in the opposite direction.  
4:35 The founders of this study  
4:38 would never in their wildest dreams  
4:40 have imagined that I would be standing here today, 75 years later,  
4:45 telling you that the study still continues.  
4:49 Every two years, our patient and dedicated research staff  
4:52 calls up our men and asks them if we can send them  
4:56 yet one more set of questions about their lives.

5:00 Many of the inner city Boston men ask us,  
5:03 "Why do you keep wanting to study me? My life just isn't that interesting."  
5:08 The Harvard men never ask that question.  
5:11 (Laughter)  
5:20 To get the clearest picture of these lives,  
5:23 we don't just send them questionnaires.  
5:26 We interview them in their living rooms.  
5:29 We get their medical records from their doctors.  
5:32 We draw their blood, we scan their brains,  
5:34 we talk to their children.  
5:36 We videotape them talking with their wives about their deepest concerns.  
5:41 And when, about a decade ago, we finally asked the wives  
5:45 if they would join us as members of the study,  
5:47 many of the women said, "You know, it's about time."  
5:50 (Laughter)  
5:51 So what have we learned?  
5:53 What are the lessons that come from the tens of thousands of pages  
5:58 of information that we've generated  
6:01 on these lives?  
6:03 Well, the lessons aren't about wealth or fame or working harder and harder.  
6:10 The clearest message that we get from this 75-year study is this:  
6:16 Good relationships keep us happier and healthier. Period.  
6:23 We've learned three big lessons about relationships.  
6:26 The first is that social connections are really good for us,  
6:30 and that loneliness kills.  
6:33 It turns out that people who are more socially connected  
6:37 to family, to friends, to community,  
6:40 are happier, they're physically healthier, and they live longer  
6:45 than people who are less well connected.  
6:48 And the experience of loneliness turns out to be toxic.  
6:51 People who are more isolated than they want to be from others  
6:57 find that they are less happy,  
7:00 their health declines earlier in midlife,  
7:03 their brain functioning declines sooner  
7:05 and they live shorter lives than people who are not lonely.  
7:10 And the sad fact is that at any given time,  
7:13 more than one in five Americans will report that they're lonely.  
7:19 And we know that you can be lonely in a crowd  
7:21 and you can be lonely in a marriage,  
7:24 so the second big lesson that we learned  
7:26 is that it's not just the number of friends you have,  
7:29 and it's not whether or not you're in a committed relationship,  
7:33 but it's the quality of your close relationships that matters.  
7:38 It turns out that living in the midst of conflict is really bad for our health.  
7:43 High-conflict marriages, for example, without much affection,  
7:47 turn out to be very bad for our health, perhaps worse than getting divorced.  
7:53 And living in the midst of good, warm relationships is protective.  
7:57 Once we had followed our men all the way into their 80s,  
8:01 we wanted to look back at them at midlife

8:04 and to see if we could predict  
8:05 who was going to grow into a happy, healthy octogenarian  
8:09 and who wasn't.  
8:11 And when we gathered together everything we knew about them  
8:15 at age 50,  
8:18 it wasn't their middle age cholesterol levels  
8:20 that predicted how they were going to grow old.  
8:23 It was how satisfied they were in their relationships.  
8:27 The people who were the most satisfied in their relationships at age 50  
8:31 were the healthiest at age 80.  
8:35 And good, close relationships seem to buffer us  
8:38 from some of the slings and arrows of getting old.  
8:42 Our most happily partnered men and women  
8:46 reported, in their 80s,  
8:48 that on the days when they had more physical pain,  
8:51 their mood stayed just as happy.  
8:54 But the people who were in unhappy relationships,  
8:57 on the days when they reported more physical pain,  
9:00 it was magnified by more emotional pain.  
9:04 And the third big lesson that we learned about relationships and our health  
9:08 is that good relationships don't just protect our bodies,  
9:12 they protect our brains.  
9:14 It turns out that being in a securely attached relationship  
9:19 to another person in your 80s is protective,  
9:23 that the people who are in relationships  
9:25 where they really feel they can count on the other person in times of need,  
9:29 those people's memories stay sharper longer.  
9:32 And the people in relationships  
9:34 where they feel they really can't count on the other one,  
9:37 those are the people who experience earlier memory decline.  
9:42 And those good relationships, they don't have to be smooth all the time.  
9:46 Some of our octogenarian couples could bicker with each other  
9:49 day in and day out,  
9:51 but as long as they felt that they could really count on the other  
9:54 when the going got tough,  
9:56 those arguments didn't take a toll on their memories.  
10:01 So this message,  
10:04 that good, close relationships are good for our health and well-being,  
10:10 this is wisdom that's as old as the hills.  
10:13 Why is this so hard to get and so easy to ignore?  
10:17 Well, we're human.  
10:19 What we'd really like is a quick fix,  
10:21 something we can get  
10:23 that'll make our lives good and keep them that way.  
10:27 Relationships are messy and they're complicated  
10:30 and the hard work of tending to family and friends,  
10:34 it's not sexy or glamorous.  
10:37 It's also lifelong. It never ends.  
10:40 The people in our 75-year study who were the happiest in retirement

10:45 were the people who had actively worked to replace workmates with new playmates.  
10:51 Just like the millennials in that recent survey,  
10:54 many of our men when they were starting out as young adults  
10:58 really believed that fame and wealth and high achievement  
11:02 were what they needed to go after to have a good life.  
11:06 But over and over, over these 75 years, our study has shown  
11:10 that the people who fared the best were the people who leaned in to relationships,  
11:16 with family, with friends, with community.  
11:21 So what about you?  
11:23 Let's say you're 25, or you're 40, or you're 60.  
11:27 What might leaning in to relationships even look like?  
11:31 Well, the possibilities are practically endless.  
11:35 It might be something as simple as replacing screen time with people time  
11:41 or livening up a stale relationship by doing something new together,  
11:46 long walks or date nights,  
11:49 or reaching out to that family member who you haven't spoken to in years,  
11:54 because those all-too-common family feuds  
11:57 take a terrible toll  
12:00 on the people who hold the grudges.  
12:04 I'd like to close with a quote from Mark Twain.  
12:09 More than a century ago,  
12:11 he was looking back on his life,  
12:14 and he wrote this:  
12:16 "There isn't time, so brief is life,  
12:20 for bickerings, apologies, heartburnings, callings to account.  
12:26 There is only time for loving,  
12:29 and but an instant, so to speak, for that."  
12:34 The good life is built with good relationships.  
12:39 Thank you.