



TARNYA DAVIS talks about new proof of how a happy life is a long life.

THE pessimists of the world gave a knowing shake of the head this week at news that confirmed their fears. They were right when they thought it was all stacked against them. The evidence shows it's true, right down to the fact that they won't live as long as their chirpier neighbours.

Researchers from Boston University School of Medicine studied 69,744 women and 1429 men and found that individuals with greater optimism are more likely to live beyond 85 years, and live 10-15 per cent longer than pessimists.

Researchers posit a few explanations, including quicker recovery from stressful events due to a better ability to regulate emotions, and therefore less an impact on the body. The optimists may also be less dependent on alcohol and other unhealthy ways to manage stress and engage in healthier habits, which may prolong their lives.

It's such an interesting study, and contributes to our knowledge of the importance of our psychological wellbeing upon our physical health and, in turn, our life span. I look forward to the time when we start to see good mental health as being as important to living a long life as not smoking and engaging in regular exercise.

Optimism isn't a fix trait - it's something that is malleable and influenced by therapy as well as social connections. Training yourself to become more optimistic might be one of the best strategies to prolong your life. As they say, always look on the bright side of life, (it might be over sooner than you think).

**Tarnya Davis is a clinical and forensic psychologist and principal of NewPsych Psychologists.**