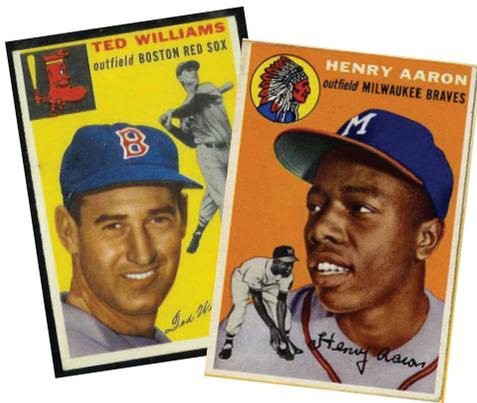


Can You Live 7 Years Longer by Smiling?

Baseball Cards and Nuns' Diaries: The Secret to a Longer, Happier Life

The secret of living a long and happy life has been the pursuit of kings and commoners for centuries. The Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon was charged with a cross-Atlantic expedition to uncover a piece of that puzzle – the fountain of youth. Though he found Florida, he did not find the fountain. Maybe he was looking in the wrong place. Maybe he should have been looking at baseball cards and nuns' diaries instead.



So what do photos of baseball players and the autobiographies of Catholic nuns have to reveal about living a long and happy life? Well surprisingly more than you might think.

Ernest Abel and Michael Kruger, two researchers from Wayne State University, examined 230 baseball cards from players who started their careers before 1950. They separated the players' photos into three groups: 1) those with no smiles, 2) partial smiles, and 3) full smiles. The findings were fascinating. **Players with no smiles lived to an average age of 72.9 years,**

those with partial smiles lived 75 years, and those with full smiles lived 79.9 years. The span of their smiles predicted the span of their lives – and big smiles were associated with seven more years of life! These results could not be explained by the players' attractiveness, college attendance, marital status, career length, or body mass index.

In another study, researchers at the University of Kentucky (Danner, Snowden & Friesen, 2001) dissected the emotional content in the autobiographies of 180 Catholic nuns written in the 1930s and 40s when they were in their early 20s. The results were remarkable. **By age 80, the most cheerful nuns had a survival rate of 75%, while only 40% of the least cheerful group had survived. In fact, the happiest nuns lived 10 years longer than the least happy nuns!**



Subsequently, Ed Diener and Micaela Chan did a comprehensive review of scientific literature in 2011 and concluded that happiness increases how long we live by 4 to 10 years! Those are **additional** happy years!

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