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## Duke Health Briefs: Positive Outlook **Linked to** Longer Life in Heart Patients

### article details

<b>keywords :</b>	<a href="#">Cardiology</a>
<b>date :</b>	4/21/2003
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<b>editor's note :</b>	"Duke Health Briefs" contains consumer health information and is distributed every Monday by the Duke University Medical Center News Office. To hear an audio clip of this Health Brief, visit <a href="#">Duke MedMinute</a> .

Here's some health advice to take to heart: if you want to live longer, stay happy. A recent Duke study of more than 800 heart patients found that **those who reported experiencing more positive emotions such as happiness, optimism and joy were 20 percent more likely to be alive after 11 years than those who more often experienced negative emotions.**

Beverly Brummett, Ph.D., assistant research professor in the department of psychiatry at Duke University Medical Center, conducted the study. Her findings were presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychosomatic Society in March.

The study was designed to see if positive effect was a predictor of survival of all-cause mortality in cardiac patients. The study sample consisted of 866 Duke cardiac catheterization patients who were tracked for an average of 11.4 years. The average age of the patients was 60.3 years. Nearly three-fourths were male.

The prevalence of positive emotions and positive personality traits were assessed using the Positive Emotions facet of the Extraversion domain for the NEO personality inventory. Patients reported how often they experienced positive emotions such as the urge to jump for joy, intense joy, optimism, light-heartedness and the ability to laugh easily.

"I am excited about the findings between positive affect and longevity," Brummett said. "However, it could just be that the people that are experiencing more positive emotions just by definition are having a lower frequency of negative emotions and that's what's driving the reduction in mortality."

Brummett says that the adverse health effects of negative emotions are well-documented, but that researchers may also want to look more closely at the benefits of positive emotions.

"It could be that there's something very unique about the physiological things that go on when we experience positive emotions," she explains. "There may be something in the serotonin system, something going on with blood pressure, heart rate, those sorts of things. This is such a new area of research that we just don't really know."