

A few examples: a study from the University of California, Los Angeles of people who are caring for a relative with dementia, long-term, and looked at their caregiver's telomere maintenance capacity and found that it was improved by them practicing a form of meditation for as little as 12 minutes a day for two months. Attitude matters.

If you're habitually a negative thinker, you typically see a stressful situation with a threat stress response, meaning if your boss wants to see you, you automatically think, "I'm about to be fired," and your blood vessels constrict, and your level of the stress hormone cortisol creeps up, and then it stays up. And over time, that persistently high level of the cortisol actually damps down your telomerase. Not good for your telomeres.

On the other hand, if you typically see something stressful as a challenge to be tackled, then blood flows to your heart and to your brain, and you experience a brief but energizing spike of cortisol. And thanks to that habitual "bring it on" attitude, your telomeres do just fine.

So what is all of this telling us?

Your telomeres do just fine. You really do have power to change what is happening to your own telomeres.

But our curiosity just got more and more intense, because we started to wonder, what about factors outside our own skin? Could they impact our telomere maintenance as well?

You know, we humans are intensely social beings. Was it even possible that our telomeres were social as well? And the results have been startling.

As early as childhood, emotional neglect, exposure to violence, bullying

and racism all impact your telomeres, and the effects are long-term.

Can you imagine the impact on children of living years in a war zone? People who can't trust their neighbors and who don't feel safe in their neighborhoods consistently have shorter telomeres. So your home address matters for telomeres as well.

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On the flip side, tight-knit communities, being in a marriage long-term, and lifelong friendships, even, all improve telomere maintenance.

So what is all this telling us? It's telling us that I have the power to impact my own telomeres, and I also have the power to impact yours. Telomere science has told us just how interconnected we all are.

But I'm still curious I do wonder what legacy all of us will leave for the next generation? Will we invest in the next young woman or man peering through a microscope at the next little critter, the next bit of pond scum, curious about a question we don't even know today is a question? It could be a great question that could impact all the world.

And maybe, maybe you're curious about you. Now that you know how to protect your telomeres, are you curious what are you going to do with all those decades of brimming good health?

And now that you know you could impact the telomeres of others, are you curious how will you make a difference?

And now that you know the power of curiosity to change the world, how will you make sure that the world invests in curiosity for the sake of the generations that will come after us?



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