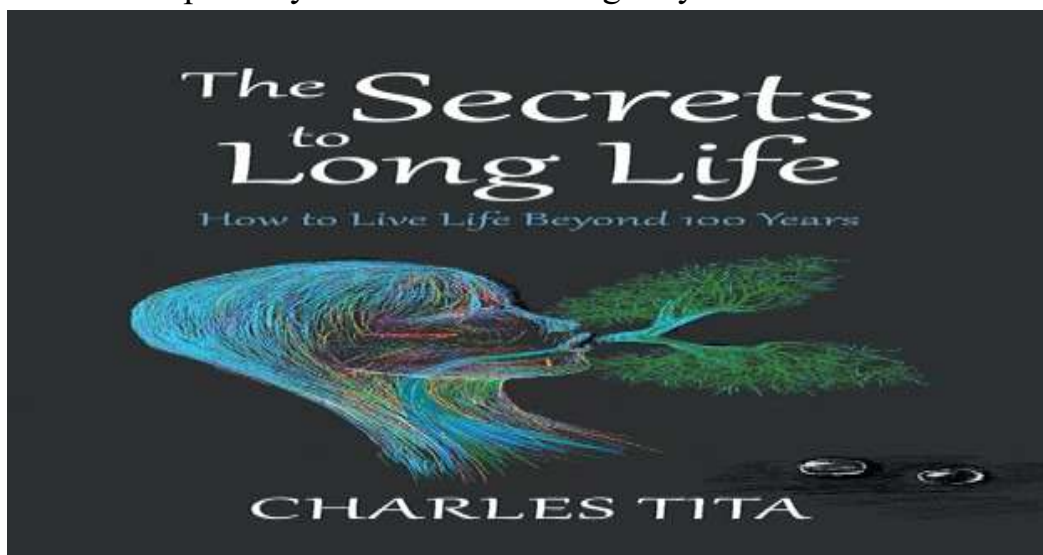


## SECRETS OF LONG LIFE



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The bold letters in the heading on the email in my inbox read, “Harvard research suggests meaningful relationships are a prescription for better emotional, mental, and physical health and possibly more critical to longevity than exercise or diet.”



So in addition to my three cups of coffee a day, there's another road to longevity. (Of course, there's the weekly 250 minutes of moderate exercise. *Oh well*, I smile to myself, *I'll definitely focus on the friendship route to well-being.*)

“Aren't you lonely?” someone once asked me. I've been widowed for many years, and I know the answer is definitely a no.

“No,” I replied. I may be alone a great deal of the day (all the better to write a book, my dear) but lonely.... No.

Think about it. Sometimes, aren't you lonely even in a crowded room if there's no one you know or no one who appears to be interested in speaking to you? That's real loneliness!

I truly believe “No” is the answer. I’m not lonely because I have friends I can call 24/6 who genuinely care, who want to hear about the trivial, the triumphs, the frustrations, and yes, the fears. I like to think that it’s reciprocal, and they know that I, too, can provide a listening ear, can respond with a laugh to the important issues, from dieting to attempting to understand and validate the life-altering events that are also a part of everyone’s life.

The specifics may differ, but no matter the issue, everything is easier borne when shared with a deeply caring friend. We often laugh, and even in the same conversation can skip back and forth from the ridiculous, “I can’t believe I made s’mores at midnight!” to the challenge of the serious health issues of someone we love.

It isn’t because we’re alike. In fact, each of my friends is different from one another and in many ways, from me. One friend who I met on a sabbatical year at Yale University is from a long line of followers of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. One friend who started out as my neighbor was raised in upstate New York, where her father had a chicken farm, while her husband stems from Germany Jewry, who follow the customs of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch. One friend who I speak to on a daily basis was raised in a nonreligious family, discovered religion in college, and met her husband, who is from Morocco, during a summer trip to Israel. One close friend is the child of Holocaust survivors and was raised in the Midwest. Another, also a child of survivors, was raised in Montreal. One I met on a trip to Florida, and another at a retreat for mothers of children with special needs. One relationship began professionally, when she edited my books for publication. Each friend is a facet in the diamond of my life.

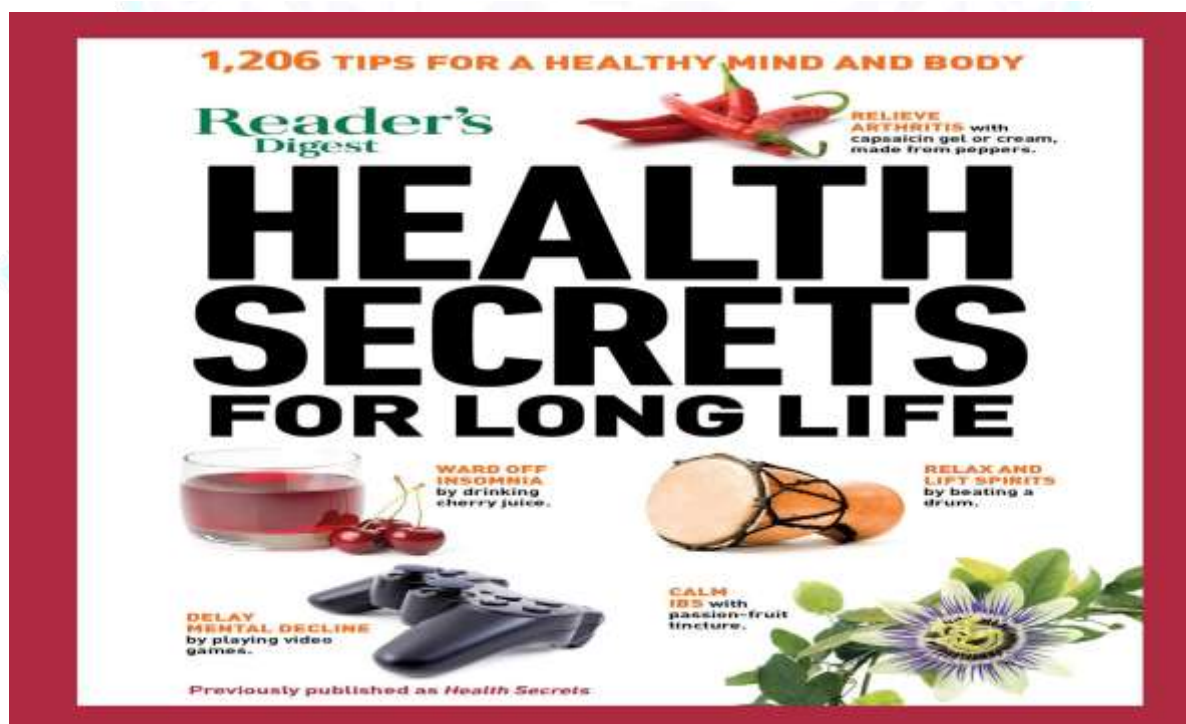


We don’t share the same social groups or go to the same shuls or follow the same minhagim. We do share a commitment to a life of Torah and faith in G-d’s control of every detail of our lives, even if we daven in a different shul or use a different siddur

or have different Yom Tov customs. We may differ in our circadian rhythms. I'm more of a morning person, sort of winding down as the sun begins to set, and there's the, "Please, not before noon, after my second cup of coffee" friend. One of them is always ready when I suggest, "How about retail therapy on the Avenue"? Balancing that, "What, you bought *another* tchotchke?" is the response from another dear friend while she rolls her eyes! But you know, that's part of being in a relationship — our idiosyncrasies are irrelevant to our deep respect for each other.

With some of my friends, I share a love of books, from Jane Austen to present-day writers. With others, we share a love of folk music, or a love of aesthetics and decorating and planting. Sometimes all we have in common is being raised by mothers who insisted on writing thank-you notes and proper social etiquette.

One of my friends is a fellow writer, and another is my constant muse who encourages my writing. With one, what connects us is that we met in high school and our children attended the same schools.



But with all of them, I have the knowledge that we're here for each other. No, I'm not lonely. We support each other through moments of stress, the unknown, the sadness of irretrievable and unfathomable loss. And we're there for each other for the things on the opposite end of the spectrum of life... from the excitement of the trivial, like a new mug for my collection, or a day when the feeling of spring permeates the air and we rejoice in planting the first smiling pansies. Shared joy, shared sadness, are all included in the fabric of our friendships.

What a wonderful path to longevity (we daven!) together with an amazing cup of fresh roasted coffee (or two or three?). And then perhaps I'll take a walk on the beach with a friend. Does that count as moderate exercise?

#### Used literature

1. Professional English in Use.Medicine. Eric H. Glendinning, Ron Howard; Cambridge. 2017
2. English in Medicine. Eric H. Glendinning, Beverly A.S.Holmstrom
3. Uchebnikangliyskogoyazykadlyameditsinskixvuzov. MaslovaA.M.idr.Moskva. 2018