

Mental Time Travel

Middle School

High school

Elementary Education



Intervention Overview

Mental time travel involves both positive reminiscence about past events, as well as positive imagination about future events. Just as with the [HEAL](#) process, practicing mental time travel motivates students to focus on and absorb the positive experiences in their lives. Encourage students to share their excitement about an upcoming vacation, birthday, or other positive event. You can also have students bring to mind a favorite memory and picture all the details of that positive event. Though this can be done in a single session, research suggests that practicing daily mental time travel, for at least two weeks, contributes to the most significant improvements in wellbeing (Quoidbach et al., 2009).

Intervention Guide

Grade Level:	All
Materials:	None
Duration:	5-10 minutes, repeat as needed.
Implementation:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Have students imagine one or more positive events that could take place in the future, or four positive memories.2. Encourage them to picture as many details of the event as possible in their minds, including any emotions they might experience (or already experienced if reflecting on memories).3. Have a few students share their examples with the class, or have them write down what they imagined.

Does it work?

In one study on mental time travel, a group of 210 university students were asked to imagine four positive events that could happen the following day (Quoidbach et al., 2009). Some of the examples students shared were receiving a text message from a significant other, eating at their favorite restaurant, or getting the job they interviewed for. Participants reported a significant increase in happiness and decrease in anxiety by thinking about positive future events, as opposed to negative or neutral ones (Quoidbach et al., 2009). Quoidbach and colleagues (2010) completed an additional study the following year with 282 university students and employees in Belgium. They found that positive mental time travel, both reminiscing about the past and imagining the future, were linked to improvements in positive emotion and life satisfaction (Quoidbach et al., 2010).

References:

- Quoidbach J., Berry E., & Hansenne M., & Mikolajczak M. (2010). Positive emotion regulation and well-being: Comparing the impact of eight savoring and dampening strategies. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 49(5), 368-373.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2010.03.048>.
- Quoidbach, J., Wood, A.M. & Hansenne, M. (2009). Back to the future: the effect of daily practice of mental time travel into the future on happiness and anxiety. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 4(5), 349-355.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760902992365>



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