

The secret powers of time

Do you often think about the past? Can you enjoy the present time, or do you worry about the future? The psychologist Professor Philip Zimbardo describes three types of people: past, present and future people.

What time type are you?

Past types

You enjoy remembering the past and sometimes you miss 'the good old days'. You worry about making change or trying new things. You spend a lot of time with your family.

Present types

The most important thing is to feel good now. You like doing fun things with fun people. You don't have a healthy lifestyle. You avoid doing difficult or boring things.

Future types

You spend most of your time working, saving and planning for a better future. You eat well and exercise regularly. You can say 'no' to immediate pleasures. You don't mind waiting for the good things in life. Future people are usually more successful in work and study. But they often don't enjoy their free time because they are busy thinking about the next thing.

According to Zimbardo's research, most people are mainly a past, present or future type, although everybody is sometimes the other types. Ideally, we should try to have an equal balance of all three to be happy and successful, and to have good relationships.

Match the words to their meaning

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|--------------|--|
| 1. Lifestyle | A. Things you enjoy, things which make you happy |
| 2. Immediate | B. The way you live, the things you do |
| 3. Pleasures | C. Happy to wait, not in a hurry |
| 4. Patient | D. Happening right now, happening quickly |

True Or False?

1. Past type people feel life changes are a good thing TRUE | FALSE
2. Past type people don't have a lot of time for family TRUE | FALSE
3. Present type people go to the gym often and eat healthy foods TRUE | FALSE
4. Present type people dislike routine and being bored TRUE | FALSE
5. Future type people have a healthy lifestyle TRUE | FALSE
6. Future type people can be more patient TRUE | FALSE
7. According to research, you can only be one type: past, present or future TRUE | FALSE

How past-focused are you?

1. How often do you look at old photos or videos?
 - a. often
 - b. sometimes
 - c. never
2. Who do you prefer to spend time with?
 - a. friends I met a long time ago
 - b. new friends
 - c. both old and new friends
3. Are you interested in your parents'/ grandparents' stories about the old days?
 - a. yes, very interested
 - b. quite interested
 - c. no, not at all
4. Do you enjoy family events, like birthday parties?
 - a. I love them
 - b. they're OK
 - c. not really
5. Where do you go for your summer holiday?
 - a. the same place every year
 - b. a different place every year
6. When did you last see your older relatives?
 - a. very recently
 - b. quite recently
 - c. a long time ago

Results

If you have 3 - 6 'a' answers, you're very past-focused. If you have 0-2 'a' answers, you're not very past-focused.