

Making the most of it: Study reveals motivating factor for enjoying the present

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It is common knowledge that when something becomes scarce, its value goes up. This concept does not just apply to material goods—time can be an extremely valuable commodity, especially when it is in short supply. According to a new study, thinking that we have a limited amount of time remaining to participate in an activity makes us appreciate the activity that much more and motivates us to make the most of it.

Psychologist Jaime L. Kurtz from Pomona College investigated how our behavior and attitude towards an activity change when there is a limited amount of time remaining to engage in it. A group of college seniors participated in this study, which occurred 6 weeks prior to graduation. Every day for two weeks, the students were to write about their college experiences, including the activities they participated in. The experiment was designed so that some of the students were to think about graduation as a far-off event and some students were told to think about graduation as occurring very soon.

The results, reported in *Psychological Science*, a journal of the Association for Psychological Science, reveal that the students' behavior was influenced by how the graduation deadline was framed (that is, whether graduation was occurring shortly or in the future). It turns out, the students who thought of graduation as occurring very soon reported participating in more college-related activities compared to the students who thought of graduation as a far-off event.

Kurtz surmises that when faced with the imminent end of college,

students were more motivated to take advantage of the time they had left in school and participate in as many events as possible—the students realized it would be their last chance to engage in college-related activities. Kurtz notes that although it may seem counterintuitive, these findings support the idea that "thinking about an experience's future ending can enhance one's present experience of it". In addition, Kurtz suggests that "focusing on the fact the experiences like these are fleeting enhances enjoyment by creating a 'now or never' type of motivation".

Source: Association for Psychological Science

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