

Packing your troubles away actually works says new paper

March 24 2010

Finding it hard to get over a failed love interest? Just can't get details of a bad financial move out of your head?

A new study from the Rotman School of Management suggests you might want to stick something related to your disappointment in a box or envelope if you want to feel better. In four separate experiments researchers found that the physical act of enclosing materials related to an unpleasant experience, such as a written recollection about it, improved people's [negative feelings](#) towards the event and created psychological closure. Enclosing materials unrelated to the experience did not work as well.

"If you tell people, 'You've got to move on,' that doesn't work," said Dilip Soman, who holds the Corus Chair in Communication Strategy at the Rotman School and is also a professor of marketing, who co-wrote the paper with colleagues Xiuping Li from the National University of Singapore and Liyuan Wei from City University of Hong Kong. "What works is when people enclose materials that are relevant to the negative memories they have. It works because people aren't trying to explicitly control their emotions."

While the market implications might not be immediately obvious, Prof. Soman believes the findings point to new angles on such things as fast pick-up courier services and pre-paid mortgage deals that relieve people's sense of debt burden. If people realize that the memory of past events or tasks can be distracting, perhaps there is a market for products

and services that can enclose or take away memories of that task.

The paper is to be published in [Psychological Science](#).

Provided by University of Toronto

Citation: Packing your troubles away actually works says new paper (2010, March 24) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-03-paper.html>

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