Thoughts about time inspire people to socialize

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Does thinking about time or money make you happier? A new study published in *Psychological Science,* a journal of the Association for Psychological Science, finds that people who are made to think about time plan to spend more of their time with the people in their lives while people who think about money fill their schedules with work, work, and -- you guessed it -- more work.

To find out how thinking about time or money makes people feel, Cassie Mogilner of the University of Pennsylvania designed an experiment, carried out online with adults from all over the United States, in which they concentrated on money or time. In this experiment, volunteers were asked to unscramble a series of sentences. Some participants were presented with sentences containing words related to time (e.g., "clock" and "day"), whereas others' sentences contained words related to money (e.g., "wealth" and "dollar"). Next all participants were asked how they planned to spend their next 24 hours. The ones who had been primed to think about time planned to spend more time socializing. People who'd been primed to think about money planned to spend more time working.

She also carried out the experiment on low-income people and found that having them think about time had the same effect, but having them think about money did not. This may mean that low-income people already live concerned about and, therefore, highly focused on money, Mogilner speculates.

But Mogilner wanted to test the effect in the real world, seeing how

people actually spent their time. So her research team approached people going into a café on campus to ask them to take part in a questionnaire, which included the word-scrambling task that primed them with thoughts of time or money. These individuals were then watched to see how they spent their time in the café—whether they chatted with people there or on a cell phone, or whether they worked. When they left the café, they filled out a second questionnaire about how happy and satisfied they felt. The results were similar: People who were primed to think about time spent more time socializing and were happier, while people who were primed with money spent more time with their noses buried in books and were less happy when they emerged.

Although focusing on money motivates people to work more, passing the hours working does not generally make one happy. Spending time with loved ones does, and thinking about time might motivate people to pursue these social connections. "There is so much discussion and focus on money, optimal ways to spend and save it, and the relationship between [money](#) and happiness," says Mogilner. "We're often ignoring the ultimately more important resource, which is time." She does not suggest that people stop working altogether, but she does say that people need to be reminded to make time for friends and family.

Provided by Association for Psychological Science

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