

A trip down memory lane

I've always been fascinated by the ways that every experience we've been through, the good and the bad, come together to create the people we are today. Maybe the child who was always picked last for the sports team grew up determined to make others feel welcomed and wanted. The one obsessed with music now effortlessly tunes-in to moods and emotions, another who faced tragedy holds those they love a little closer, and the friend who always left the group belly laughing harnesses that confidence to drive them towards their dreams.

In a fascinating area of psychological study, researchers consistently trace the ways that early experiences shape the people we become, with biological, sociological, and psychological influences gradually unfolding over the course of a lifetime (for more on that, head to p45 where we explore personality tests and how to use them). On a holistic level, looking back can help us reconnect with our hopes and dreams, as well as examine the challenges we've been through, and the hurt we might still be holding on to.

On p92, we share practical activities to help you plot, and reflect on, your life. And on p16, we look at the peaks and troughs of nostalgia, questioning whether this psychological phenomenon helps or hinders our mental health, and asking what happens when our lives don't follow the trajectory we once longed for.

The past can stir up bittersweet feelings, which muddy the waters when it comes to the topic of nostalgia. We can just as easily get caught in remorse as we can in relish. But, recently, I was given some advice that completely changed my relationship with the past: "You can't blame yourself for not knowing back then what you know now."

Something clicked inside me, and with that, the shame, guilt, disappointment, hurt, frustration, and regret that so often builds up over a lifetime, didn't vanish – *anyone* who's been through *anything* knows it's never that simple – but felt manageable. The affirmation worked because it's not particularly philosophical, it doesn't require self-belief, hope, or even any real reflection. It's just a fact, it's just the truth.

This month, I pass this wisdom on to you. And as you journey through these pages, I hope they support, touch, entertain, and enrich you – but, most of all, I hope they inspire you to treat yourself with the kindness you deserve, because it's about time.



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