WEEKLY ENGLISH PRACTICE

Does Time Really Go Faster As We Get Older?

16/12/21 / Keyword: Time

Albert Einstein proved that time is slowed down by gravity and acceleration. But we feel that time actually *speeds up* as we age. Why? ECP coach Rob looks at a possible explanation.

If you ask a young child to sit quietly, close their eyes, and state when a minute has passed, most children will report a minute has elapsed in 40 seconds or less. Do the same experiment with adults, and they will probably report a minute has passed in 60 to 70 seconds. For a child, one minute of "clock time" is perceived in their mind as lasting over 80 seconds. A minute actually lasts longer for children than it does for adults. Time starts off slowly and gradually **speeds up** as we **age**. This difference in perception can be seen in those **youthful** memories of long, boring days at school interspersed with **endless** summer holidays that then become **fleeting** days, weeks, and months as we progress through adulthood.

Why does this happen? A fascinating explanation has been posited by Professor Adrian Bejan. He hypothesises that, over time, the **rate** at which we process visual information slows down, and this is what makes time **speed up** as we grow older. He argues that as children's naturally faster heartbeats and breathing **rates slow down** as their bodies mature, so does the rhythm of their brains.

As seen in the experiment described above, scientifically measurable "clock time" and purely subjective "mind time" are not the same. The definition of one second is universally agreed on, but mental time - memory - is a reconstructive process that involves a great deal of mental imagery. Like **frames** in a movie, the more **frames** one sees in a second, the slower the image appears to pass. Bejan asserts that young minds **pack** many more mental images into a second than an older person does. As we **age**, we "record" fewer **frames** per second and the resulting movie - our memory - seems to move faster compared to the slower, image-**packed** movies of our youth. Compare a slow-motion video to a time-lapse recording. In the first, seconds stretch into minutes. In the second, minutes are compressed into seconds.

The root cause of this change, Bejan argues, is that the size, complexity and degradation of our brains' neural networks increase as we mature and **age**. This means electrochemical signals must traverse greater distances across increasingly damaged **pathways**, inevitably **slowing down** processing time.

So, is there anything we can do to **slow down** the passage of time? We can no longer process all those images that made those slow-motion memories of our childhood, but we can learn to spend more time observing and appreciating what is happening around us as each day passes. By keeping a journal where we record our activity and contemplate our actions and decisions, or through activities such as mindfulness or photography, we can retain and reflect on more information from every day and increase the volume of memories that we create, that we can look back on. In addition, taking up new hobbies and developing new relationships will keep our brains active and allow us to **slow down** our neural decline. *Turn to page 2* ☞ ☞ ☞

Useful vocabulary

to speed up: to move more quickly
to age: to become older
youthful: characteristic of young people
endless: interminable, without end
fleeting: lasting for a very short time
rate: the speed with which something moves or happens
to slow down: to reduce speed
frames a single complete picture in a series that forms a film
to pack: to put a large number of objects into something
pathway: a route (formed by a chain of nerve cells)
to ripen: to become more mature (typically fruit or grain)
to mellow: to relax because of maturity or experience

Let's chat about that!

1. **Did time sometimes pass slowly when you were at school? And now, at work?**
2. **What are your first memories as a child? And what are your favourite ones?**
3. **Do you worry about having enough time to do everything you want to do in your life? (Do you have a bucket list?)**
4. **How can we enjoy life more?**
5. **Watch the two jokes (links on page 2). Do you get them?**

LIVE!English Events

Coffee Saturdays

2021-22

11:00-12:30

Panadería Bertiz C/Francia 10

2nd October	5th March
6th November	2nd April
4th December	7th May
5th February	4th June

Watch a great video from the BBC here:
https://www.bbc.com/reel/video/p07d07d3/why-time-seems-to-speed-up-as-we-get-older

Great videos to watch

Watch Professor Adrian Bejan explain his ideas:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KAJmHKieWDk

Watch these two jokes about time

☜ *Click here*

Click here ☞

"Live life to the full" is an age-old saying that, if put into practice as we **ripen** and **mellow**, may in fact turn ageing into an action-packed movie with a few additional slow-motion scenes that will continue to make us smile as we enjoy a second childhood.

As Einstein so famously proved, time is relative, depending on the observer. So, let's observe more (and better) and make our precious time here on Earth last longer, even if that perception is only inside our own heads.

Adapted from this article at psychologytoday.com by ECP coach Rob.

For real, successful translations, contact ECP.

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