



The Healing Power of Nostalgia

[Science Friday - Podcast](#)



Exercise A. Write down three things (smell, sound, songs, flavours, etc.) that make you feel nostalgic.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

Discuss why these things make you feel nostalgic.

Exercise B. Listen to the first part of the podcast (-17:26 - -16:08) and answer the question below.

- 1. What does the host of the podcast get nostalgic about?
 - A) the sound of old music
 - B) the vanilla-y taste of cream soda
 - C) the summery smell of freshly cut grass

Do you agree with the speakers? Do these stimuli get induce your nostalgia?

Exercise C. In pairs, think about some benefits of nostalgia. Continue listening to the recording (-16:08 - -14:06) and check your answers. Choose the best definition of the word 'nostalgia'.

- 2. What are some benefits of nostalgia?

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- 3. What is the best definition of the word 'nostalgia'?
 - A) an inability to move forward
 - B) pleasant memories
 - C) a type of mental illness

Exercise D. Continue listening to the podcast (-14:06 - -12:05) and answer the questions below.

- 4. What feelings are often incorrectly associated with nostalgia?
 - A) happiness, gratitude, motivation, satisfaction
 - B) loneliness, pointlessness, anxiety
 - C) distanced, lack of direction, confusion
- 5. Why did people use to think about nostalgia negatively?
 - A) it was believed to be the cause of negative emotions
 - B) because it made people distance themselves from others
 - C) because it often occurred with negative feelings simultaneously

Exercise E. In pairs, discuss different ways of inducing nostalgia. Continue listening to the recording (-12:05 - -10:47) and check your answers.

- 6. How can you induce nostalgia?

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How do you induce nostalgia?



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Exercise F. Listen to the next part of the recording (-10:47 - -8:11) and choose the best answer.

7. What are some ways of processing nostalgia?
- A) passing on some traditions and adapting them to the modern world
 - B) creating new traditions that can replace the feeling of nostalgia
 - C) keeping the traditions the same way as they used to be
8. What negative effects of nostalgia can be seen in unfriendly and cold people?
- A) it encourages them to connect with other people
 - B) it disables them from having successful relationships in the future
 - C) it makes them focus on their personal aims

Exercise G. In pairs, discuss the differences between personal and group nostalgia. Continue listening to the recording (-8:11 - -6:31) and check your answers.

9. What is the difference between personal and group nostalgia?

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Discuss examples of group nostalgia in your country.

Exercise H. Listen to the next part of the recording (-6:31 - -4:08) and answer the questions below.

10. Which part of the brain is responsible for nostalgia?
- A) It involves many different parts of the brain and many processes, many of which haven't been discovered yet.
 - B) prefrontal cortex and hippocampus that are involved in the production of memories
 - C) electrical impulses produced in the brain which regulate brain activity
11. Which word best describes the feeling of nostalgia?
- A) homesickness
 - B) appreciativeness
 - C) greatness

Exercise I. As a group, discuss how accurate our memories are. Do you think that we tend to remember things in the same way in which they happened? Continue listening to the recording (-4:08 - -2:57). Describe in your own words what Andrew said about memories.

Do you have any memories that seem to be unreal or a bit exaggerated?



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Exercise J. Listen to the next part of the recording (-2:57 - -0:00) and answer the questions below.

12. Why does Clay compare our memory to a tape recorder?

- A) because we can rewind our memories and replay things the same way they happened
- B) he uses it to contradict the idea of our brains working like tape recorders
- C) because our memory may jam, and we get stuck at a particular memory which may cause trauma

13. Why does Clay mention the movie editing process?

- A) to say that we have selective memory and tend to keep positive thoughts over the negative ones
- B) to say that we do not have the capacity to store all the memories in our brains
- C) to say that we tend to keep only most important events in our brains, including the negative ones

Exercise K. Do you agree with the following statement. Why?

People can even be very nostalgic about difficult times in their lives.

Do you tend to have more positive or negative feelings about your past?

Exercise L. Using your phone, find different things that may cause group nostalgia, e.g. *the sound of dial-up Internet*.

Do you think that no matter the generation, we all have the same group nostalgia, e.g. *the smell of freshly cut grass*.

Teacher's notes

Exercise A. Lead-in.

5 mins

Ask students to think about three things that make them nostalgic. In case of bigger groups, you can ask students to write their answers on sticky notes, put them on the whiteboard and divide them into different categories, e.g. smell, taste, sound, etc.

Select a few students to share one of their nostalgic memories with the rest of the group and express why this memory is special to them.

Exercise B. Listening Part 1.

5 mins

Give students some time to read the question and the three options. At this point, do not explain the meaning of the word host. Students listen to the beginning of the podcast (-17:26 - -16:08). Check and discuss the answers.

1.A - *I spent hours digging through old LPs.*

Explain the meaning of LP (long play - typically a longer version of the album with 20+ tracks) and a host (a person who has guests).

Discuss if students have similar nostalgia triggers.

Exercise C. Listening Part 2.

6 mins

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Students discuss the benefits of nostalgia and try to choose the best definition of nostalgia.

Listen to the recording (-16:08 - -14:06), check and discuss the answers.

2. Benefits of nostalgia: *Researchers have found that nostalgia may actually be an emotionally protective force in times of crisis.*

3.B - *it's specifically for a cherished memory for one's past.*

Exercise D. Listening Part 3.

6 mins

Students work individually. Give them some time to read two questions and all the answers. Listen to the recording (-14:06 - -12:05)

4.B - *it suggests is that when people are experiencing negative state emotional states, whether it's anxiety or loneliness or meaninglessness, they want to feel better. Right? We naturally want to do something to improve our situation*

5.C - *the co-occurrence of nostalgia and suffering was historically thought of as nostalgia causes suffering*

Exercise E. Listening Part 4.

6 mins

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Students discuss different ways in which we can induce or trigger nostalgia.

Listen to the recording (-12:05 - -10:47), check and discuss the answers.

6. Nostalgia induction: *listen to music, consume media that reconnects us to the past, journaling and scrapbooking.*

Ask and discuss how students induce nostalgia and how often they do it.

Exercise F. Listening Part 5.

4 mins

Give students some time to read the question and the three options. Students listen to the recording (-10:47 - -8:11). Check and discuss the answers.

7.A - *in tribute to my grandmother, I'm going to try to pass on these traditions to the future generation. I'm going to try to innovate, to take something from the past that worked for them and take the meaningful aspect of that and come up with a newer version that'll work in the modern world and that'll work for the way we do things now*

8.C - *people who are a little bit standoffish in their relationships, their nostalgia tends to be less social. It's focus is less on these feelings of love and belonging. But in contrast, it focuses more on achievements, on personal successes*

Teacher's notes

Exercise G. Listening Part 6.

6 mins

Divide students into pairs or small groups. Students discuss the difference between personal and group nostalgia.

Listen to the recording (-8:11 - -6:31), check and discuss the answers.

9. Personal nostalgia: *the nostalgia of an individual.*

Group nostalgia: *the nostalgia of many people, e.g. certain type period, people living in the same area, etc.*

Ask about the group nostalgia of people in their country.

Exercise H. Listening Part 7.

6 mins

Students work individually. Give them some time to read two questions and all the answers. Listen to the recording (-6:31 - -4:08), check and discuss the answers.

10.A - *it involves lots of different regions of the brain, lots of different processes. Some of them have been discovered and others are ongoing research into the neuroscience of nostalgia.*

11.B - *people reflect on how they're thankful for having experienced things in their past. So I think nostalgia is similar to show gratitude.*

Exercise I. Listening Part 8.

6 mins

As a group, discuss the accuracy of our memories. Proceed by listening to the recording (-4:08 - -2:57) and ask students to report what they heard about the memories.

the memories that we have right now aren't actually a memory of the initial event, but it's a memory of a memory of a memory

Discuss if students have any memories that they aren't sure of.

Exercise J. Listening Part 9.

7 mins

Students work individually. Give them some time to read two questions and all the answers. Listen to the recording (-2:57 - 0:00). Check and discuss the answers.

12.B - *memory doesn't work like a tape recorder where we could just roll back the tape and be like a computer and be like, oh this is exactly what happened*

13.A - *more like you might think of like a movie making process, which is when you watch a movie you don't see all the raw footage. That would be boring. When filmmakers make movies and they film I don't know, hundreds of hours of film, and we see two hours of it.*

Exercise K. Post-listening discussion.

6 mins

Look at one of the final statements from the recording. Discuss to what degree students agree with the statement. Think about some examples and potential reasons we tend to think about our past through rose-coloured glasses.

Exercise L. Individual presentations.

7 mins

Ask students to use their phones and show some things that cause nostalgia (it can be a discontinued product, an old TV show, etc.). Students present them to each other and discuss why they make them feel nostalgic.

In the case of bigger groups, students may exchange their ideas in pairs.

Error corrections.

5 mins

Take notes of the most common mistakes and deal with them in the last part of the class.