

Boost your creativity by developing your “distant thinking” skills

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The common human default mode is that we focus our energy on the here-and-now, and care less about ourselves and the events of the farther-off future.

This present-bias can get in the way of all sorts of decisions that might improve our lot. The struggle with delayed gratification is what makes it hard to choose saving for retirement over spending today, or committing to a diet or exercise plan for our future health at the cost of spending less time on the couch binging Netflix and a pint of Ben & Jerry's. Or, say, supporting public policy aimed at tamping down the march of global warming for the benefit of future generations. An inability to think far into the future has also been shown to influence our empathy and ability to consider the perspective of our enemies.

Researchers that include UCLA Anderson's Hal E. Herschfield have established that prompting individuals to [think about their own distant future](#) reduces acts of present-bias. Young adults shown a photographic rendering of their retirement-age self committed to saving more today for retirement. Individuals prompted to think about themselves 20 years on chose to exercise more often. It also prompted participants in one study to make more ethical choices.

The creative mind may tell us still more about how we connect to our future selves.