Is Mental Time Travel Good for Us?

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In our fast-paced modern lives, we are increasingly encouraged to stop and focus on the present. And there are tangible advantages.

Studies on the effects of mindfulness and meditation — practices that gear people’s cognitive capacities towards the present moment — have pointed to reduced stress, increased focus and less emotional reactivity.

As a result, mindfulness has become a billion-dollar industry that promises to alleviate all manner of psychological ills.

However, Anna-Lisa Cohen, a psychology professor at Yeshiva University in New York, says that while there is concrete evidence pointing to the positive changes that mindfulness can bring about, we shouldn’t overlook other tools.

“While there is scientific evidence that mindfulness and meditation do lead to positive changes in our brains and biology, especially for stress reduction,” Cohen says, “I think it is also important to carve out space in the public forum to acknowledge the new science on the benefits of doing the opposite.”