

The Unexpected Charm of Facebook Memories

November 24, 2015

New York Magazine:

Recently, Facebook resurfaced an old photo of mine, taken in 2009. Really, it is an unremarkable photo, just me and three friends sitting around playing video games. And yet I couldn't stop looking at it: my friend's old apartment, another friend's old haircut, the Asics in which I ran my first half-marathon. Every boring detail in this ostensibly boring photo was captivating.

...

If you're skeptical, I'm not surprised, and neither is Ting Zhang, a Harvard Business School professor and author of a 2014 [paper](#) published in *Psychological Science* on the "unexpected value of rediscovery." In it, she and three Harvard colleagues argue that people underestimate how much joy they'll get by revisiting memories of perfectly ordinary moments from the past. For one experiment, Zhang and her co-authors asked people to prepare a time capsule, including things like a recent photo and a short essay about a recent conversation they'd had. They were also asked to estimate how interested in these mementos they thought they'd be in the future. Three months later, they were given the opportunity to dig into those time capsules, and the memories meant more to the study participants than they'd expected.

Read the whole story: [New York Magazine](#)