5 Simple Ways to Slow Time, According to Science

5 MIN READ

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Science shows there’s a real reason our perception of time accelerates with age. But the good news is, you can slow it down.

When we’re young, life is packed with “firsts”: your first job, first love, first trip abroad. These novel experiences create rich, detailed memories that anchor our perception of time, making it feel slower and more expansive. As we age and settle into routines, fewer new experiences mean fewer memory landmarks, causing time to blur and speed by.

A 2019 study in ***Trends in Neuroscience*** sheds light on the brain mechanisms behind this phenomenon. Novel experiences trigger dopamine release in the hippocampus, the brain’s memory hub, strengthening memory formation and making moments feel more vivid. The study authors explain that different types of novelty activate separate dopamine pathways, each helping to create lasting, rich memories that stretch our perception of time.

Two Types of Novelty and How They Affect Memory

You know that feeling when you go on a trip and find the perfect beach cove or local gem? That’s what researchers call a “distinct novelty,” something totally fresh and new that your brain hasn’t experienced before. Now, imagine visiting a place you’ve been to before, but with a new cool café or art gallery you hadn’t noticed. That’s more like a “common novelty,” it’s new, but it’s related to stuff you already know.

Our brains actually handle these two kinds of new experiences in different ways,

according to this study.

- **Common novelty** is the kind that gets folded into what we already know, like updating a file on your computer. This helps you remember the general idea, but perhaps in a less detailed way.
- **Distinct novelty** fires up a different system that preserves all the rich, juicy details, the sights, sounds, emotions, almost like a snapshot that stays super vivid. These are the memories that really stick with you, the ones you can recall years later in amazing detail.

So, when you try new things that are completely different from your usual routine, you're basically telling your brain, "Hey, this is important! Save this one with all the extras." And that's one of the ways you can make your life feel fuller and stretch out your sense of time.

You don't always need to travel far to tap into this effect. Studies show that exposure to awe-inspiring sights, like panoramic nature scenes or grand architecture, **can lengthen our perception of time**. Psychologists Sylvie Droit-Volet and Michaël Dambrun found that awe captures our attention so fully, it slows our internal clock, making moments feel more abundant.

This means that whether it's watching a sunset, visiting a museum, or simply gazing at beautiful art, moments of awe can help you savor time more deeply.

5 Simple Ways to Slow Time According to Science

1) Seek Novel Experiences Regularly: Try new activities, visit new places, or learn a new skill to keep your brain engaged and memory-rich. Even small changes, taking a different route home, experimenting with new recipes, can add novelty to your routine.

2) Spend Time in Nature: There is **growing evidence** that spending time in nature actually changes how we experience time. Studies show when people hang out in the great outdoors, they tend to feel like the time lasted way longer than it actually did. Plus, they start seeing their past, present, and future in a way that's way more positive, not just stuck in the moment. Nature's basically a time-bender for your brain.

3) **Embrace Awe:** Make time for inspiration whether it's through art exhibits, music, nature, or any experience that sparks wonder. These **moments of awe** don't just uplift your spirit, they literally **help stretch your sense of time**.

4) Practice Mindfulness: Focusing on the present moment actually boosts your awareness of time passing and **makes it feel like it's slowing down**. Research shows that mindfulness meditation and deep breathing exercises help stretch out your subjective experience of time, so you're less rushed and more grounded in the here and now.

5) Mix Routine with Spontaneity: While routines support efficiency, weaving in unpredictable or unfamiliar elements can keep your days feeling fresh and expansive.

Our experience of time influences not only how we remember life but also how we live it. Slowing down time perception encourages savoring moments, reducing stress, and fostering deeper connections—key ingredients for mental and emotional longevity

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