

Prospective psychology: Brain's focus on future guides our behavior and survival

What best distinguishes our species [from other animals] is an ability that scientists are just beginning to appreciate: We contemplate the future. Our singular foresight created civilization and sustains society. It usually lifts our spirits, but it's also the source of most depression and anxiety....

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Psychoanalysts believed that treating patients was a matter of unearthing and confronting the past...But it is increasingly clear that the mind is mainly drawn to the future, not driven by the past. Behavior, memory and perception can't be understood without appreciating the central role of prospection...Our brain sees the world not by processing every pixel in a scene but by focusing on the unexpected.

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While most people tend to be optimistic, those suffering from depression and anxiety have a bleak view of the future — and that in fact seems to be the chief cause of their problems, not their past traumas nor their view of the present.

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The main purpose of emotions is to guide future behavior and moral judgments, [according to researchers](#) in a new field called [prospective psychology](#). Emotions enable you to empathize with others by predicting their reactions.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [We Aren't Built to Live in the Moment](#)