

Heart-warming memories: Nostalgia can make you feel warmer, researchers find

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Feeling nostalgic can make you warmer.

(Medical Xpress)—As the nights draw in and the temperature begins to drop, many of us will be thinking of ways to warm up on the dark winter nights. However, few would think that remembering days gone by would be an effective way of keeping warm.

But research from the University of Southampton has shown that feeling nostalgic can make us feel warmer.

The study, published in the journal *Emotion*, investigated the effects of

nostalgic feelings on reaction to cold and the [perception](#) of warmth. The [volunteers](#), from universities in China and the Netherlands, took part in one of five studies.

The first asked participants to keep an account of their nostalgic feelings over 30 days. Results showed they felt more nostalgic on colder days. The second study put participants in one of three rooms: cold (20°C), comfortable (24°C) and hot (28°C), and then measured how nostalgic they felt. Participants felt more nostalgic in the cold room than in the comfortable and hot rooms. The volunteers in the comfortable and hot rooms did not differ.

The third study, which was conducted online, used [music](#) to evoke [nostalgia](#) to see if it was linked to warmth. The participants who said the music made them feel nostalgic also tended to say that the music made them feel physically warmer.

The fourth study tested the effect of nostalgia on physical warmth by placing participants in a cold room and instructing them to recall either a nostalgic or ordinary event from their past. They were then asked to guess the temperature of the room. Those who recalled a nostalgic event perceived the room they were in to be warmer.

Study five again instructed [participants](#) to recall either a nostalgic or ordinary event from their past. They then placed their hand in ice-[cold water](#) to see how long they could stand it. Findings showed that the volunteers who indulged in nostalgia held their hand in the water for longer.

Dr Tim Wildschut, senior lecturer at the University of Southampton and co-author of the study, comments: "Nostalgia is experienced frequently and virtually by everyone and we know that it can maintain psychological comfort. For example, nostalgic reverie can combat

loneliness. We wanted to take that a step further and assess whether it can also maintain physiological comfort.

"Our study has shown that nostalgia serves a homeostatic function, allowing the mental simulation of previously enjoyed states, including states of bodily comfort; in this case making us feel warmer or increasing our tolerance of cold. More research is now needed to see if nostalgia can combat other forms of physical discomfort, besides low temperature."

Provided by University of Southampton

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