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Negative emotions from past catch up with health

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London: Dwelling on the past may not only stop you from enjoying each day to the full — it could also be bad for your health.

Research suggests that people who look back at their past experiences full of regrets about missed opportunities or with bitterness about how they have been treated are more likely to fall ill and generally have

a poorer quality of life.

Those who look back in anger are also more sensitive to pain, it found. It also suggested that focusing too much on the future does not harm health — but can stop people enjoying what they have. The happiest and healthiest people are those who manage to enjoy the here and now.

University of Granada researcher and co-author of the study Cristian Oyanadel said: "According to what we have observed, the most influencing dimension is the perception of the past.

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"We have observed that when people are negative about past events in their life, they also have a pessimist or fatalistic attitude towards current events. This generates greater problems in their relationships and these people present worse quality of life indicators.

Personal goals

"People who are more future-focused — those who put their personal goals before everything — forget to live pleasant experiences and are not very connected to their positive past experiences. They are not physically or mentally unhealthy but have a lower quality of life than the well-balanced group."

The people who are best off, conclude the researchers in the journal Universitas Psychologica, are the sorts who have a nostalgic view of the past and manage to learn from it, rather than let it drag them down.