

Resource 2: Perception of time

We all perceive time differently, and have different experiences of time at various stages of our lives. At times it rushes by so fast we can't cling on to it quickly enough, while at other times it drags, apparently hindering our progress. Some schools of thought believe that time can actually stretch, while for others it's all about perception.

Think about occasions when your perception of time has been altered. Perhaps you have noticed that an outward journey has taken far longer than the homeward journey when in reality they were identical in length. Or maybe time seems to flow faster now that you are older than it did ten years ago! It's as if when we are focused on the passage of time it actually passes more slowly than when the mind is focused on something else.

Some believe that when we have new challenges to face, time appears to pass more slowly. When we are in routines that we know inside out, time appears to pass more quickly. This is easy to relate to when thinking about holidays. A week-long break away suddenly seems like a glorious period stretching ahead, as we experience new things, people and places, while a week at work, doing the usual thing each and every day can pass in a flash.

Perhaps Albert Einstein summed this phenomenon up in his famous quote:

'When you sit with a nice girl for two hours, it seems like two minutes; when you sit on a hot stove for two minutes, it seems like two hours. That's relativity.'