



Time Travel

- Useful for:** understanding a group's experience of positive and negative change, understanding a group's hopes/fears for the future (and from this their current sensitivities), understanding priorities of needs.
- Very good for:** self-discovery, empathy, invention, cohesion.
- Good for:** realization.
- Type of exercise:** individual or team.

General description:

Any exercise that invites a group to look into the past or imagine the future fits into this category. Looking at the past or future is a great way to get people to examine specific aspects of their present situation. At the heart of this kind of exercise is comparison. Participants have to consider the present and some other time, and compare them. The focus you give to the exercise will obviously determine what they focus on, so this exercise can be tailored to examine very specific aspects, very general things or anything in between. It is, however, important to indicate how many things you want them to list because this creates a minimum expectation and implicitly asks them to prioritize – if you ask for three things, the participants have to decide which top three things are the most important or relevant. Another variable that can be used to calibrate the exercise is the recipient of the message from the past or future: the self works best for patients/caregivers and occasionally physicians; peers works well with physicians and corporate colleagues; while third parties work with all participants.

Requirements:

A worksheet with a visual theme that reflects the projected date of the assignment and plenty of space for the participants to write notes. This type of exercise doesn't require a particular stimulus.

Example assignments:

- 'A new feature on your phone allows you to send a text message back in time X years to yourself. What five things would you tell your younger self to do differently regarding ZXY (subject)?' The worksheet could be a large drawing of a smartphone with space to write within the message app (the length of the message is a variable you can play with).
- 'Your team will go back in time for a medical congress. As specialists of the future, you must make a speech describing to your colleagues how their practice will change over the next X years. List the top three positive and top three negative things you think they should know await them.' The worksheet could be a mock-up agenda of a symposium of a medical congress that really took place in the past, with spaces to write the names of the speakers and their main talking points.

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Example assignments:

- ‘Thinking of X years ago, what are the five things you are most nostalgic about regarding X (subject: condition, clinical practice, brand) and the five things you are most thankful have changed?’ The worksheet could have an illustration of a pair of scales (one plate ‘nostalgic’ and the other ‘grateful’) with space above the two plates in which to write the two sets of five things.
- ‘You have a telescope that looks into the future. When you look at ZXY (subject: it could be their clinical practice for healthcare practitioners; a patient’s quality of life for caregivers; their product/service for clients), what do you see?’ The worksheet could have an illustration of a telescope running across the top and below it three or four moleskinstyle notebook pages to write on with ‘Observations’ as a heading. The number of pages indicates your expectation of the number of observations you would like the participants to imagine.

Outcome:

When reviewing the outcome, it is vital to look at what is omitted as well as what is included and ask why something didn’t make the list because sometimes the things that don’t make the list reveal more about opinions, beliefs and experience than those that do.