

THE SCIENCE OF SCRAPBOOKING – WHAT EVERY PARENT NEEDS TO KNOW

New studies show that scrapbooking makes young women happier.

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Studies indicate that as time spent on smartphones increases, teens and young adults, particularly females, are increasingly likely to suffer from loneliness, depression and anxiety. Suicides are increasing and are a leading cause of death among young Americans. Though boys are more likely to die by suicide than girls, this gender gap has been closing because suicide rates are increasing the most among female youth.¹

These issues are certainly complex. However, studies indicate that social media and screen time may be contributing factors. A recent review of research on how smartphone use influences psychological functioning concluded that “smartphones consistently interfere with the emotional benefits people could otherwise reap from their broader social environment.”² And young people are spending more and more time online. According to the Pew Research Center, 45% of American teens say they are online almost constantly, a number that has nearly doubled within the last five years.³

These concerning trends make it clear that we need to identify and develop resources and activities that can help teen girls and young women find and maintain vital social connections as well as cope with the stressors of modern life.



Research shows that activities involving nostalgic reflection like scrapbooking increase feelings of connection, boost positive mood and bolster a sense of meaning in life.⁴

Multiple studies have demonstrated that nostalgic activities inspire people to connect with others, serving as an antidote to feelings of isolation generated by viewing and comparing oneself to the activities of others online.⁵

With these issues in mind, our research team conducted a study in collaboration with Creative Memories to explore the potential for scrapbooking to be a beneficial social activity to help female college

students experience nostalgia and its many benefits.

For this study, we recruited female students from a large Midwestern university, divided them into groups of four to five and conducted three one-hour scrapbooking sessions over a period of about six weeks (each session was separated by two weeks). During these sessions, these students printed photos, created pages and discussed their scrapbooks with the group.

What did we find? First, and critically, scrapbooking generates nostalgia.

Scrapbooking is an excellent way to help young women experience the mental health benefits of nostalgia.

A wide body of research indicates that nostalgia is beneficial to mental health and generates feelings of belonging. It focuses people's attention on relationships by making them feel more socially valued and competent and also more motivated to pursue social goals. Scrapbooking together successfully facilitated a feeling of connectedness and social bonding within the group, which surprised our research team, given the students did not know one another prior to the study.

How does scrapbooking impact these social variables?



Participants indicated: Creating their scrapbook increased wellbeing by reminding them of meaningful memories and relationships.

They also plan to share their albums with others, recommend scrapbooking to other students and would be interested in participating in more scrapbooking sessions.

In the follow-up survey we conducted six weeks after the study, nearly all respondents reported they have

looked at their scrapbooks with family, romantic partners or friends. Participants also scored very high on questionnaires assessing the extent to which scrapbooking made them happy and relieved stress. The pleasant emotions associated with scrapbooking might help explain our finding that nearly all participants reported plans to continue scrapbooking in the future and were inclined to view scrapbooks as a source of comfort and a way to help manage negative emotions.

Our findings suggest that scrapbooking has the potential to not only promote social connections and wellbeing, but also help people manage negative emotional experiences.

Humans have a fundamental need to belong as well as to perceive their lives as meaningful. When they have met these needs, they are mentally and physically healthier and more motivated to pursue goals and overcome life's challenges and stressors. Our initial study suggests that scrapbooking is a great collaborative activity that can help young women feel happier, healthier and more connected with each other.

Dr. Routledge is a scientist, author, public speaker and professor at North Dakota State University. He studies psychological needs and how these needs influence wellbeing, physical health and intergroup relations. His research, which focuses on the need for meaning in life and the need to belong, has been funded by the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, John Templeton Foundation and Society for the Scientific Study of Religion.

He has published 95 scholarly papers, co-edited two books on existential psychology, authored two books and was the lead writer for the TED-Ed animated lesson Why Do We Feel Nostalgia?



¹ https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2733430?utm_source=For_The_Media&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=ftm_links&utm_term=051719

² <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0963721419847200>

³ <https://www.pewinternet.org/2018/05/31/teens-social-media-technology-2018/>

⁴ Routledge, C. (2015). *Nostalgia: A psychological resource*. New York: Routledge Press.

⁵ Abeyta, A. A., Routledge, C., & Juhl, J. (2015). Looking back to move forward: Nostalgia as a psychological resource for promoting relationship aspirations and overcoming relationship challenges. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 109, 1029-1044.