Ten years ago, families dragged out their photo album once a year for a tour of fading snapshots. Today, digital cameras let parents produce archives befitting a child star. With glimpses of their über-documented upbringing just a click away, children can relive their experiences early and often, a trend that could shape their adult memories of childhood.

Studies show that looking at pictures is an effective way of reactivating a memory—a key factor in forming long-lasting memories. And reactivating selected memories likely comes at the expense of non-reviewed events, which fade. Additionally, photos can prompt individuals to “travel back” to an event and recall info that cannot be inferred from a picture alone, such as what one was thinking at the time.

If kids are constantly revisiting only their cheeriest milestones (via online albums and Mom’s camera phone), "they may create an overwhelmingly positive set of memories, thereby constructing a happy childhood," says Alan Brown, a psychologist at Southern Methodist University. Tots can even choose which times to relive, carving out their autobiographical memories. "Now the child writes her own story," Brown says.—Jill Coody Smits

Daydream Reliever
Thinking about the distant past or faraway places disrupts your ability to recall new memories, according to a new report in *Psychological Science*. Call up far-off memories to get over a bad day, but don't dredge up those fancies after hearing something that needs to stick.

**Déjà Vu Cue**

*Visualization may be key to remembering chores.*

Forgot to stop for milk—again? Didn't pay back a coworker, despite the cash in your pocket? Researchers at Washington University in St. Louis have some novel memory advice. "We know from previous studies that rehearsing, 'Pay Joe!' before the fact is not effective," says researcher Mark McDaniel. A better tack: Before bed, attach a specific environmental cue to the task (say, you visualize pulling out $20 in the break room where you know you'll see Joe)—and your memory will be jogged the next day.

Sleep strengthens the brain's weak associations (in this case, the link between an intended action and a context indirectly related to it—like the break room), which are more memory-effective than strong associations (the link between the task and the direct context—your creditor in the flesh). Follow these steps at night to boost your to-do follow-through.—*Marissa Conrad*

**Pre-Snooze Checklist**

1. Pick a task that may slip your mind tomorrow—say, asking your boss for vacation time.
2. Vividly visualize a scenario in which you're performing the task. Focus less on the transaction (asking for January 3) and more on the surroundings (the conference room where you'll run into him, down to
the rolling chairs). Those cues—indirectly linked to the task—will be cemented as you sleep.

3. If your task could be done in multiple contexts, repeat with a new scenario—say, seeing him in the elevator. The more clues you plant, "the better the odds that one will jog your memory," McDaniel says.

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