# Back then – today – tomorrow

## An exercise for dealing creatively with your own past, present and future

Take a little time and make yourself comfortable.
Imagine the doorbell rings. You go to the door, open it, and see a small child standing there. Maybe you're a little surprised because you weren't expecting the child. You no doubt ask the child what it wants and where it has come from. But the child doesn't answer. It doesn't know the answers. Strangely enough, however, it is determined to come in. It knows it's at the right place, that this visit is about something important. And because you are so surprised and the child so determined, you don't even think twice about it – the child comes into your home, and into your life. Maybe you have a little time on your hands. You speak to one another, perhaps you offer the child a hot chocolate or a lemonade, biscuits, or a piece of cake.

There is something strangely familiar about the child. The situation might feel a little confusing for you, and it may even make you feel angry. "Who is this child," you ask yourself, "suddenly sitting in my home?" You take a closer look and then suspect something very peculiar. You closely examine the appearance, voice, gestures, and facial expressions of the child sitting opposite you, look for particular physical features, and something becomes very clear and undisputable: sitting opposite you is you as a child – you when you were perhaps four, or eight, or ten years of age.

You need to take some time to get used to the idea that you are being visited by your own younger self. That can trigger off very different feelings: anger, joy, shame, sadness, disappointment, longing. Perhaps also a certain curiosity. Curiosity about yourself and your own life – what was it really like back then? What were your everyday sources of joy and what were your problems, how did you experience your life and what did you see your future as being like back then?

And if you're curious or interested enough, then you can just ask your younger self sitting opposite you. You can hear your own life being explained from your perspective as a child. Follow what interests you, and don't be afraid to explore. Ask questions and you'll get answers.
But there are also questions from the other side: What has become of your wishes and hopes, what have you achieved out of all those childhood plans? And if something has not come to be – are there good reasons for that?

Only when you feel you've asked enough is it time to invite someone else in. The other person missing from the conversation is the man or woman you will become in future, let's say in about ten or twenty years. You should try and imagine what this person will be like, also to the satisfaction of the child.
When your future self is sitting there – what do they look like? Where do they live, which of the child's and the adult's dreams have they achieved? How will you live once you've


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made all those things happen that are still pending, all the things you've not yet managed to do, the things for which there still hasn't been space for in your life? Not only the material things you might have wanted, like a house, a horse, or a boat, but more than anything the desires, feelings and ideas.
Was your future self able to answer your questions? Let your future self tell you about the way things will go, how you will solve upcoming problems, where you will find the strength, what new opportunities will turn up. Let yourself be taken to a time at which all the things that worry you and seem insolvable today lie far in past.
Take time to see things through the eyes of your future self. Look at yourself from the future.

And if it all gets too much for you in one sitting, then you can always invite your past and future selves back again any time.

Maybe you would even like to arrange regular visits of this kind?

Have fun with your new friends!

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