

“Negative Nostalgia”

“PSA’s: A Source of Negative Nostalgia”

“Disturbing PSA’s: Traumatic Nostalgia”

“Why Are PSA’s Disturbingly Nostalgic”

Is it possible to be nostalgic towards memories that aren’t positive? We are indirectly told that nostalgia must be peaceful, maybe ultimately sorrowful; a melancholic simulation that you find yourself exploring from time to time. Every time I’d try to search for an answer to that question, I would only find results like “how to get over bad memories” or “how to focus on the good times” – as if thinking back on a negative memory is simply a traumatic response rather than a memory.

See, originally, this was just going to be a list video. “10 Disturbing PSAs that were banned” or something. A video displaying alternate public service announcements; commercials that often held a deeper, much darker, reason to them. Good clicks, interesting topics, we all say howdy-doo in the comments and go along our way. And so I bookmarked approximately 50 URLs, and began my search for a good batch to showcase.

And that’s when it happened.

I watched multiple PSA’s that all jolted something inside my mind. The amount of times I went “Oh my god, I remember this!” before I was overcome with a wave of grief and ... something else. I couldn’t place my finger on it, but it persisted. Oftentimes, this specific feeling would arise whenever I would watch PSA’s from this specific campaign – Meth: Not Even Once. And after numerous viewings, and with a feeling of shame, I was able to realize...

These made me nostalgic.

I wasn’t smiling, or happy about what I was seeing, or what I was remembering. But that nostalgic wave overcame me nonetheless. I mean – why? Why couldn’t I just be nostalgic over early 2000’s Pokemon soundtracks and weird Simpsons Butterfingers commercials? Why was I

feeling like I was missing being a child ... from watching horrific Meth PSA's? I'd understand if I was thinking back to when I used to hike the railroad tracks with childhood colleagues, or all the times I was clueless towards being flirted with.

But sure enough, there I was. Thinking back to the days where my dad would record Simpsons episodes on his VHS player. I'd think about the times that either the remote was dead, or we were just too lazy to fast forward as buttons back then had a massive input delay. You'd fast forward, blink, and next thing you know, you're speeding through a chunk of the show – and now you have to rewind, meaning you either went back to the middle of some Pizza Hut commercial, or you snipped into the beginning of the episode playing. So, due to that issue, we would occasionally just let the commercials play, and that's often where some of these PSA's were scattered in.

This still didn't answer my question. Why did these make me ... melancholic? Dr. Newman, a postdoctoral scholar in the department of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the University of California, who specifically studies nostalgia – once said “When you long for a time in your past, it can make you miss that time”. I love you guys but let's not act like this is ground-breaking. It is very obvious that we become critical of the past, wishing we could change certain aspects and situations.

...and this is where i gave up :/