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**Kate:** Hello, I'm Kate Colin and welcome to 6 Minute English. Today I'm joined again by Jackie Dalton and we're talking about smells and memories.

**Jackie:** Hi Kate, yes our topic today is about how certain smells can take us back to another time and place. We've all experienced the sudden flashback of memory and emotions that certain smells conjure up. To **conjure up** means to create picture in your mind. Often we don't just remember something from the past, we feel exactly the same way as we did the first time we smelt it.

**Kate:** Yes, for me the smell of mothballs takes me back to being in my grandmother's house. I remember exactly how I felt when I was five years old and went to visit her.

**Jackie:** And for me, the smell of lavender reminds me of the house that I grew up in because we used to have a lot of lavender in the garden.

**Kate:** So here's my question for this week. Are you ready? As we grow older does our sense of smell get better or worse?

**Jackie:** Answers

**Kate:** Alright, we'll check your answer at the end of the programme. But first we're going to hear from some people on the streets of London who are talking about what smells remind them of certain things. Listen and try to remember what specific things they say **trigger** certain memories. To **trigger** means to cause something to start....

Man 1 Pipes, smoking pipes always remind me of Isle of Wight

Man 2 And bleach smells of Majorca to me in Spain, being on holiday in Spain

Man 3 Old mud makes memories of old villages back home in India, you know

Woman 4 Cigarettes, perfume and vodka for my grandmother

**Jackie:** They mentioned pipe smoke, bleach, old mud and finally the last lady said cigarettes, perfume and vodka reminded her of her grandmother.

**Kate:** That's right. Let's hear more about how smells are linked to our emotions and memories. Let's listen to psychologist, Professor Rachel Hertz. You'll hear the word 'triggered' again. What other senses does she say can 'trigger' a memory?

#### Clip 4

Compared to a memory **triggered** by seeing something, hearing something, feeling something or the word for something.....

**Jackie:** She mentioned that memories can be triggered by seeing, hearing, feeling or hearing the word for something. But there's something different about the way we're affected by those things and by smelling.....lets listen to find out what the difference is:

#### Clip 4 continued

.....when it's a smell that brings back the memory we experience that memory as more emotionally intense, we are more back to that original time and place and actually our brain is more **activated** in the emotion centres than if it's any other cue, that brings us to the exact same memory.

**Jackie:** She said that smells bring us to the same memory as the other senses but we experience that memory as more **emotionally intense**. This means that we feel it more strongly. We are taken back to a certain time and place more convincingly than if a memory was triggered by another cue, for example a photograph or

music. And apparently this is because smell physically enters our brain and goes to the same areas where we process memory and emotion.

**Kate:** Now, let's look at some smell related vocabulary - there are many words in English we use to mean 'smell'. These include: **fragrance**, **scent** and **aroma**, **odour** and **stink**.

**Jackie:** Yes, **fragrance** or **scent** is often used when the smell is a pleasant one, perfume for example is often called a fragrance. **Scent** is also a nice natural smell. **Aroma** is often used when talking about food or drink in a positive way, for example 'the wine had a fruity aroma'.

**Odour**, however often refers to an unpleasant, for example 'inside the room there was a distinct odour of sweaty feet' and we use the word **stink** when we want to say that something smells very unpleasant, for example, 'this house stinks of cigarettes!'

**Kate:** Eurrgh! Going back what we were saying about how smells conjure up memories, what's interesting is that smells only evoke special memories for us when we don't smell them very often. For example, if we smell coffee every day, it's not going to remind us of that holiday 10 years ago.

Let's listen to the next speaker, James Watts. He's a frequent traveller and likes to pair up smells and good memories. He deliberately imprints memories of holidays in his mind each time he goes away somewhere new. How does he do this?

Man

When I go away on holidays I deliberately buy a deodorant or an aftershave so in five/ten years' time I can smell this and it can take me back, like that. Within a second a smelling it I can picture who I was with, the food we ate, the music we were into to...

**Jackie:** He said that when he goes on holiday he deliberately buys deodorant or aftershave which he uses for the duration of the holiday. Then in five or ten years' time he can sniff the bottle and be transported back in time to that specific time and place. I've never heard of anyone using smell and memory to deliberately conjure up memories like that before, but I think it's quite a good idea.

**Kate:** Yes, I might try it when I go on my holiday this year. Now let's go over some of the vocabulary we've come across today.

We had: **conjure up** - to create a picture in one's mind.

**to trigger** - to cause something to start

**emotionally intense** - to feel something very strongly

And the smell related words:

**fragrance, scent** and **aroma** which generally refer to pleasant smells

and **odour** and **stink** which are bad smells

**Kate:** So finally to my question I asked earlier. I asked you if our sense of smell gets better or worse as we get older.

**Jackie:** I said....

**Kate:** And you were correct, unfortunately as we get older our sense of smell gets worse along with all our other senses.

That's all we've got time for today, thanks for listening – goodbye!