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Maladaptive Daydreaming: More than a fantasy

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The term “maladaptive daydreaming” was coined by a University of Haifa professor named Eli Somer, one of the leading researchers on the topic.

Somer’s definition states that maladaptive daydreaming is a condition of “extensive fantasy activity that replaces human interaction or interferes with academic, interpersonal, or vocational functioning.”

Before stating symptoms, it must be acknowledged that mental conditions or disorders are different for every individual. Thus,

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they can manifest in a variety of ways and can have different intensities and traits.

However, there are some key symptoms of maladaptive daydreaming. Individuals with this condition often have extremely detailed and vivid daydreams that they spend extended periods of time thinking about. The time dedicated to the daydreams varies from individual to individual, but they usually range from minutes to a few hours. The individual may also take the aid of music or some other form of stimuli in order to continue daydreaming.

Another key feature would be the individual's physical acts during the period in which they daydream. This can be either performing repetitive actions or making facial expressions, whispering, talking etc. Additionally, an individual with this condition may feel a strong urge to continue daydreaming and find it very difficult stop.

The effects can also vary according to the person, however it is generally found that the condition affects a person's daily life. The compulsive desire to engage in daydreams can affect a person's time management skills and productivity, which results in great difficulty at completing tasks. Additionally, the person's sleep cycles may also be affected. Furthermore, it can contribute to dissociation and other mental illnesses.

Maladaptive daydreaming is not officially recognised as a psychiatric condition, which means that there is no official diagnosis. However, a psychiatrist may be able to help in this regard. If seeking the help of a professional is not a viable option, online resources can help. Professor Somer developed the Maladaptive Daydreaming Scale (MDS), which can help to determine if a person has this condition or not. As for the treatment, there are numerous online support groups filled with people who have the condition. There are also tips and tricks available online to help in reducing periods of daydreaming, such as avoiding possible triggers or consciously practising grounding exercises.

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