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THINK EDUCATION

The dark side to daydreaming



Aruna Sankaranarayanan

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Excessive and persistent daydreaming not only hampers your productivity but can also interfere with relationships. | Photo Credit: [Freepik](#)

Excessive and persistent daydreaming hampers productivity and can interfere with relationships

As you log out of online classes, a pile of assignments awaits. After catching up with Zoom-fatigued friends, you decide to tackle your readings. You sprawl on your bed with your weighty economics textbook. As you wade through the chapter on supply curves, you wonder whether your sister's wedding will end up being a small, intimate affair, thanks to the pandemic. Before long, you conjure an image of yourself in a resplendent *lehenga* with gold trimming. Shoving aside COVID-19 restrictions, you envision dancing with your friends during the *sangeet*. Suddenly, your phone pings and you glance at the time. You have spent 45 minutes and barely read two pages. Even worse, you haven't registered a word.

Many individuals daydream, especially when alone. While daydreaming has been linked to stress-release and creativity, it also has a detrimental side. Excessive and persistent daydreaming not only hampers your productivity but can also interfere with your mental health and relationships. Though maladaptive daydreaming is not listed as a disorder in the Diagnostic & Statistical Manual (DSM-V), it may morph into a "clinically significant condition", according to psychologists Eli Somer and Nirit Soffer-Dudek (as cited in a British Psychological Society blog post by Emma Young).

Watch out

Healthline.com provides a list of symptoms that indicate when your reveries may jeopardise your well being. If you have an irresistible urge to continue daydreaming even when it begins to interfere with your daily activities, then you should watch out for other at-risk signs. If your daydreams are replete with vivid sensorial images, continue for extended periods, are sparked by real-life events and accompanied by troubled sleep, you may need to seek help.

However, getting help for this condition may not be straightforward, as it is not a recognised clinical disorder. In a letter published in *The Psychologist*, Maria Tapu bemoans that maladaptive daydreaming is either mistaken as psychosis or dismissed as a fertile imagination. While schizophrenics and manic depressives have difficulty differentiating between their fantasies and reality, Somer argues that maladaptive daydreamers are aware that their daydreams aren't real. Young writes that cognitive behaviour therapy may be used to help individuals tackle their compulsion to daydream. Online support groups may also provide succour.

Counsellor Trudi Griffin offers some coping tips on wikiHow.com. Certain triggers tend to evoke daydreaming, and you must try and recognise these. It could be boredom or a specific room in the house, for example. In that case, try to stay engaged and avoid that room, especially when alone. As impaired sleep is also linked to more daydreaming, establish healthy sleep routines like sleeping and waking up at the same times. Avoid caffeine and alcohol in the evenings.

Griffin also urges one to stay active. If you feel the urge to enter la-la land, practice yoga, cook a meal, or call a friend. She also suggests journalling, as writing down your dreams may help calm your racing mind and release stress.

*The writer blogs at www.arunasankaranaryanan.com and her book, *Zero Limits: Things Every 20 Something Should Know*, will be released by Rupa Publications.*

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