

Brain and Body

## “Maladaptive” Daydreamers Dream Up to 69 Percent of the Day, Feel They Have an Addiction

By [Kelly Tatera](#) on May 16, 2016



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**Some researchers think it should be considered a mental health disorder.**

It's normal for the mind to wander sometimes, but how much daydreaming is too much? For some people, daydreams can be a pleasant break from reality, but for others, constant daydreams can overtake the mind and negatively affect their day-to-day lives.

In fact, researchers have coined the term as “maladaptive daydreaming,” and people who

suffer from the condition can become so immersed in their waking fantasies that it becomes difficult to carry out their everyday activities.

In a new study, led by Eli Somer of the University of Haifa in Israel, researchers surveyed 340 self-labeled maladaptive daydreamers and argue that maladaptive daydreaming should be considered a mental health disorder.

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According to the research results, which appear in the journal Consciousness and Cognition, maladaptive daydreamers spend an average of 57 percent of their days lost in their fantasies. On certain days, this number jumped up to 69 percent. For reference, people who don't suffer from the condition only spend about 16 percent of their time daydreaming.

Additionally, the scientists found that the maladaptive daydreamers dreamt more about fictional characters, celebrities, and idealized versions of themselves than other dreamers. Nearly all of the daydreamers felt that their waking fantasies interfered with their sleep, relationships, chores, or life goals. In fact, many of them expressed feeling like they had an addiction.

Rachel Bennett, a 27-year-old who suffers from maladaptive daydreaming, is currently unemployed because her constant mind-wandering made it difficult for her to keep up with her work duties. She tells the [Wall Street Journal](#) that she usually dreams up new episodes of her favorite Japanese animé characters, and she's

created four families of fictional characters which have evolved over the years.

"I'd much rather stay home and daydream than go out," she said. "I enjoy my daydreams very much. I just want a much better control over it."

The researchers report that the maladaptive daydreamers in their study also had high rates of attention deficit and obsessive compulsive symptoms, and that about a quarter of the study participants were trauma survivors who used daydreaming as an escape.

Somer says that many of them reported being shy and socially isolated, and notes that he has received emails from hundreds of people around the world asking for help with their addictive daydreaming.

Some experts are weary of Somer's argument that maladaptive daydreaming should be diagnosed as a mental health disorder.

"I'm very reluctant to create a category for a mind-wandering disturbance," Eric Klinger, psychology professor at the University of Minnesota, Morris, told the *WSJ*. "Once you start psychopathologizing these things you can get yourself in trouble, because often normal mechanisms account for this."

Nonetheless, Somer and his team plan to figure out ways to diagnose and treat the condition. Earlier this year, the team created a 14-item self-report tool to measure extreme daydreaming: the [Maladaptive Dreaming Scale](#) (MDS).

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