

Maladaptive Daydreaming: Signs and How to Overcome It

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Most people, especially when they're idle, indulge in seemingly harmless daydreams. Taking your mind off the hustle and bustle of everyday life and into more pleasant surroundings can seem not only harmless, but sometimes necessary. Maybe you're stuck in a long checkout line at your favorite big box store. You've checked all your messages; your phone isn't providing any distraction. Why not think about the last place you went on vacation? Remember how wonderful it felt to dip your feet in a cool pool?



Maladaptive daydreaming as a psychological disorder

Although seemingly harmless and beneficial, there may be times when daydreaming becomes more troubling. In the field of clinical psychology, the term maladaptive daydreaming (MD) is actually being proposed as a potential diagnostic category, which may share some features with obsessive-compulsive disorder, depression, and anxiety.

In addition to wasting time wandering through other times and places, people with psychopathy also feel shame, guilt, and distress. They are immersed in thoughts and images that form around a variety of idealized themes. The problem is not what they fantasize about, but how much they fantasize – and they can't stop even if they try. They can barely do anything else; the guilt and shame arise because they feel they are wasting time, or that they may actually be falling behind others. Furthermore, over time, the gap between their idealized dream world and their real life and sense of self can grow larger, deepening their feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration.

Experts don't know exactly why maladaptive daydreaming occurs. However, they suspect that it occurs because maladaptive daydreaming can be a coping mechanism for issues like anxiety, depression, and other mental health conditions.

What to do when you have maladaptive daydreaming

If you have maladaptive sleepwalking, the best thing you can do is talk to a medical professional. Because maladaptive sleepwalking is not a well-defined condition, doctors who treat ADHD, OCD, and similar conditions are likely to be familiar with it.

When you see your doctor, it is important to follow your treatment plan. This plan includes:

1. See your doctor as directed and don't miss appointments.
2. If your doctor prescribes medication, take it exactly as prescribed.
3. Set treatment goals and stick to them.
4. Avoid self-medication with alcohol or misuse of prescription or recreational drugs.

Remember that the road to recovery and personal care is not a straight line, so don't let discouragement overwhelm you when you're struggling.

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