

Positive & Social Daydreaming: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

We spend from 30 to 50 percent of our waking lives with our minds roaming. What is going on at this point? “Daydreaming.” Daydreaming is a phrase used to describe when our focus shifts from the outer world to our interior imagination, where it is an independent stimulus that is not connected to our current work. According to the findings of the study, psychologists believe that this is a negative element in the mind. There is various research that reveals the drawbacks of daydreaming, whereas few reveal its advantages. Daydreaming is largely unknown territory, and efforts are being made to identify daydreaming in a positive manner. Some evidence explains that many people are “happy daydreamers” who enjoy their inner imaginary, fantasy and enjoy their private experiences. That is “positive constructive daydreaming” associated with openness to experience, reflecting a curiosity, exploration of ideas, feelings, pleasure and happiness. This review is aimed at finding positive constructive daydreaming from a social perspective, as it restores social connectivity, love, a sense of belongingness, and happiness. Daydreaming can help individuals overcome loneliness and improve their socio-emotional well-being.

Keywords: *Daydreaming, Positive Constructive Daydreaming, Social Daydreaming, Attention, Imagination, Loneliness.*

Internal dialogues, mental images, and other thoughts occupy almost half of our waking life (Killingsworth & Gilbert, 2010; Klinger & Cox, 1987). When we are even somewhat bored or are not focused on the exterior world or task, our brain automatically switches to a default mode state (where the brain is functioning but not in the outer world), such as when we are driving, strolling, have nothing to do, or are doing dull work.

Many researchers studied and discovered about 60 years ago that when our focus changed from the outer world to the internal world, this phenomenon was known by a variety of names: spontaneous thoughts, mind wandering, imagination, and so on. Singer’s favourite word is daydreaming, and he has made significant contributions to the subject. Daydreaming is intentionally or involuntarily shifting our focus to our interior imagination (thinking about others, thinking about themselves, remembering the past and planning for the future). Daydreaming is mostly an exploration of associations and the formation of connections (past and future events). Daydreaming is an autonomous (internally generated) stimulus that is

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Received: April 16, 2022; Revision Received: August 27, 2022; Accepted: September 12, 2022

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task-unconnected since it is unrelated to the present activity at hand. From this personal perspective, it is important to understand why people are drawn to mind wandering and willing to invest nearly 50% of their waking hours engaged in it.

Since the smash film “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty” in 2013, the term “daydreaming” has become popular among us, yet it has a negative connotation. Researchers consider daydreaming to be a waste of time, as well as sluggish, inattentive, and disorganised. It was cautioned in an educational psychology textbook that it might lead to mental illness (Cronbach, 1954). It should be mentioned that most investigations by researchers have shown that daydreaming is expensive since it relieves mental tension, conflict, and physical discomfort.

Singer differentiated three styles of daydreaming: positive constructive daydreaming (playful, wishful imagery, and creative thought); guilty dysphoric daydreaming (obsessive, anguished fantasies); and poor attentional control (inability to concentrate on either the ongoing thought or the external task, Singer, 1975). Its beneficial and bad impacts, as well as positive constructive daydreaming, have not been well researched, making it unwise to look at Daydream from only one perspective. In this essay, we look at positive constructive daydreaming as a social quality that boosts positivity, social connection, and relationships.

A very popular statement given by Aristotle is, “Man is a social animal.” Humans can’t survive without relationships (live alone). Therefore, human beings interact with each other on a daily basis, make connections, live with loved ones, and have a deep impact on each other’s lives. After their survival needs are fulfilled, social needs are most important to them. The need to form and maintain meaningful social connections is central to human experience (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Positive and lasting social relationships are important for health and happiness. This virtue motivates them to achieve social connection through their thoughts, feelings, and behavior. But sometimes social connection is dealing with rejection, ostracism, or the separation from a loved one, then loneliness (Peorio, 2015), a sense of being alone might develop. Loneliness is the state where social relationships or social needs are not met (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980) and unsatisfied, unpleasant emotions that produce social pain. In the mental analysis of 70 prospective studies with nearly 3.7 million participants, stimulation of loneliness increased the likelihood of death by 26%, the risk of mortality and health risk (Holt-Lustand, 2015).

Loneliness produces a negative effect on mental health (cognition and behaviour) and physical health (Cacioppo & Cacioppo 2014). When individuals want to reconnect socially but where social connection is not found. Here, the problem with people’s social connections replenishes, where no social contact is available (Peorio, 2015). A good connection is an important component of life since it maintains pleasure, fulfilment, love, and a productive existence. When a person’s connection is threatened, he suffers from despair and anxiety and is unable to live joyfully.

Here, social daydreaming is a useful strategy to overcome loneliness, allowing one to stimulate meaningful social interaction with close significant others without social contact in reality (Peorio, 2015). Social daydreaming is a positive emotional imagination focused on others that creates the feeling of connection and attachment to a loved one. Mar, Mason, and Litvack (2012) found that daydreaming about close others was positively associated with socio-emotional well-being and daydreaming about non-close others was associated with loneliness. Our subconscious mind was unable to distinguish between reality and fantasy.

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When a person has a social imagination in their mind, our minds view imagination as a reality and secret a normal emotion. As a result, feelings of attachment, love, and connection develop.

Peorio experiments on 126 participants and assessed loneliness by the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell et al., 1980). Participants were instructed to social Daydreaming imagines themselves in a pleasant social scenario of their own choosing, with the constraint that it has to be based on reality. And non-social daydreamers are instructed that they shouldn't involve thinking about or interacting with anyone else. That proved social daydreams replenish connectedness compared to non-social daydreaming. They have an interpersonal connection, happiness, and love, but no social interaction. Another experiment was conducted on 103 first-year students participants to see how life events change their effects on any individual and examined how imagining others is related to social adjustment. The result is that during the impact of a life event (transition), social daydreams promote adjustment to social challenges.

How does it work? Most daydreaming is social in nature (Peorio, 2016), and in research, a large-scale survey identifies that daydreaming frequently or always involves others (Mar et al. 2012). 71% of the dreaming about people's thoughts is coming (Song, Wang 2012). Daydreaming helps to adapt to the value of social relationships and well-being. Daydreams often involve social cognition, which is predominantly social (mental representation of others, Peorio, 2016). When are faced with challenges in their life (emotional) their thoughts flow in dominated by those events and daydreams connected to individual current goals, needs and desires. To (Klinger, 2010), daydream content is dictated by an individual current goal pursuit desire. Daydream thoughts bias toward goals, needs, and desires that have not been fulfilled or wants to achieve them. Our surrounding external environment mostly affects our mental needs.

This article demonstrates how social reality in daydreams are connected to the socio-emotional adjustment process. Dreaming about close others is important for regulating social emotions and promoting pleasant social experiences (connection, love, belonging).

CONCLUSION

Daydreaming is a broad term with few investigations. It is mostly concerned with random ideas that divert attention from external chores to the interior pleasures of imagination. While daydreaming is commonly associated with negativity, it may also be used to promote emotional resilience, happiness, attachment, and the replenishment of social ties. When one's physical, psychological, and emotional well-being is disrupted by loneliness, there was no one with them at the time, and there was no social contact available. Social daydreaming is extremely beneficial for overcoming loneliness and improving socio-emotional well-being. It is also linked to feelings of joy, love, and connection with loved ones, as well as productivity and creativity. In the future, this notion will be more evident, and more benefits of daydreaming will be discovered.

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Acknowledgement

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Kannamwar, A. & Choudhari, V. (2022). Positive & Social Daydreaming: A Systematic Review. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 10(3), 874-877. DIP:18.01.093.20221003, DOI:10.25215/1003.093