



# Maladaptive Daydreaming: Living a Parallel Life



# What Can You Do?

Everything you already do!

We already know you are a caring provider by virtue of your client trusting you with this part of their life. MD is a newer phenomenon and research into it is ongoing, as a result many clinicians, having not heard of it yet, inadvertently invalidate their clients concerns about it during disclosure.

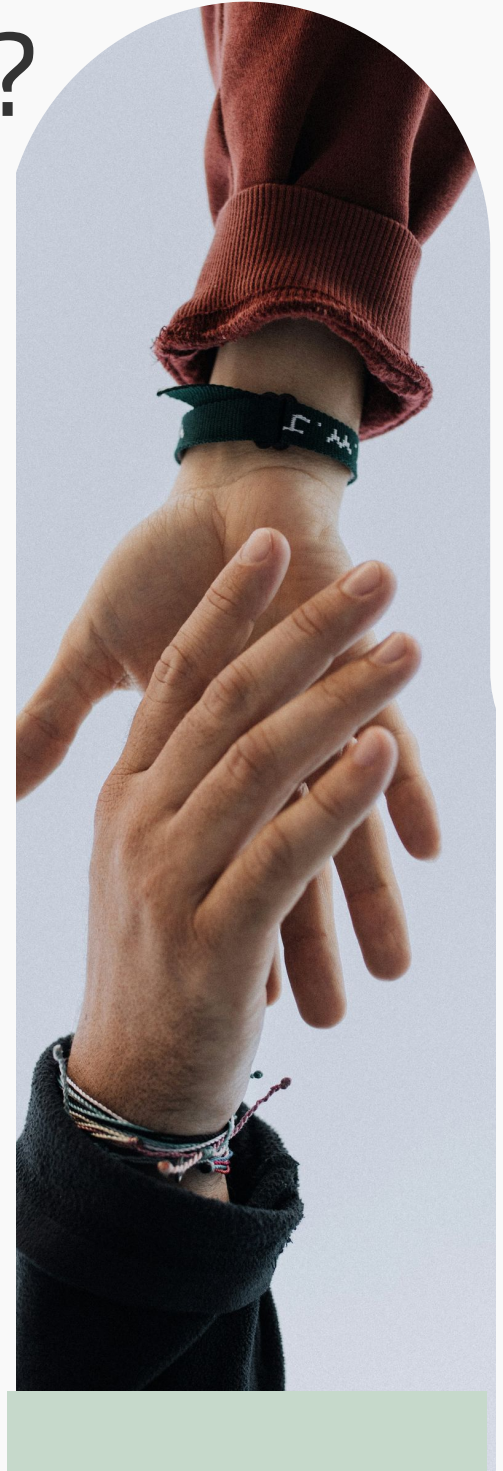
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Patients with MD often feel unheard or brushed off when discussing their fantasy behavior in clinical spaces. This feeling of dismissal can prevent them from seeking further support. Here's a typical quote:

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"I was too embarrassed to talk with my therapist about it. I kept it to myself although it is such a big part of my life..." (JK)

"I have never shared my daydreams with anyone. I make vague references to my therapist but never more than that" (NO)





## What is Maladaptive Daydreaming?

Maladaptive Daydreaming (MD) is defined as “extensive fantasy activity that replaces human interaction and/or interferes with academic, interpersonal or vocational functioning” (Somer 2002).

MD is not defined by plots or characters or even some magic number of time spent, it’s defined by its impact.

Boiled down, MD is daydreaming that interferes with someone's life. MD is defined by the distress and dysfunction associated with the daydreaming behavior. This often comes in the form of ‘yearning’ for daydreams, prioritizing time to daydream over real world goals/interactions or alienating oneself from real relationships.



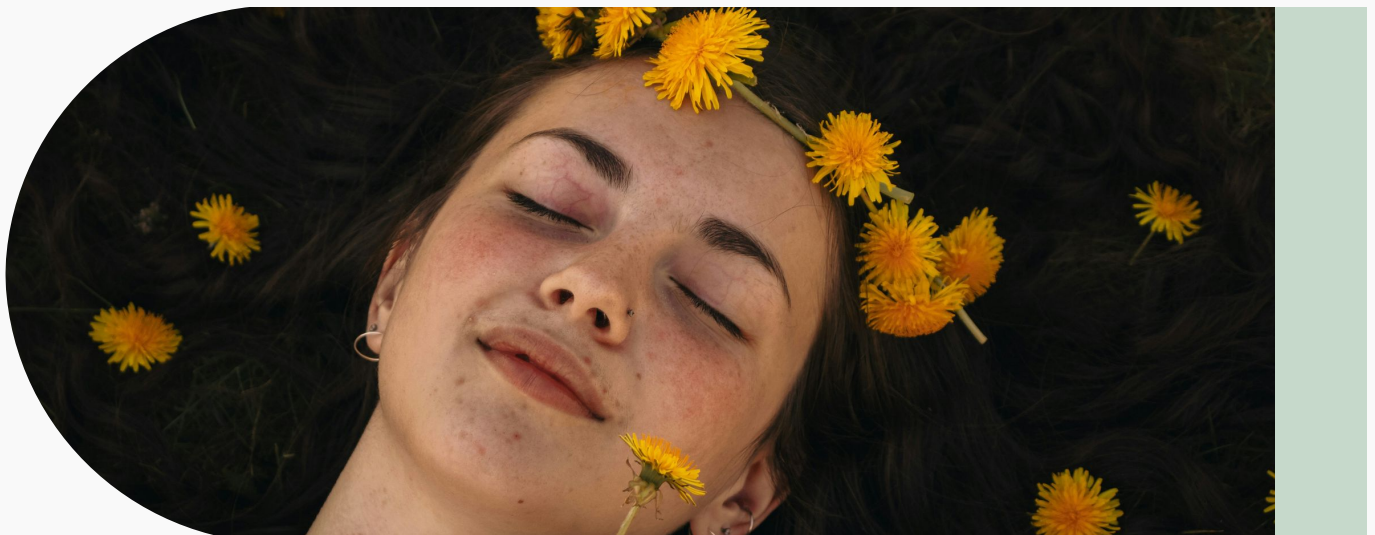
# Signs & Symptoms

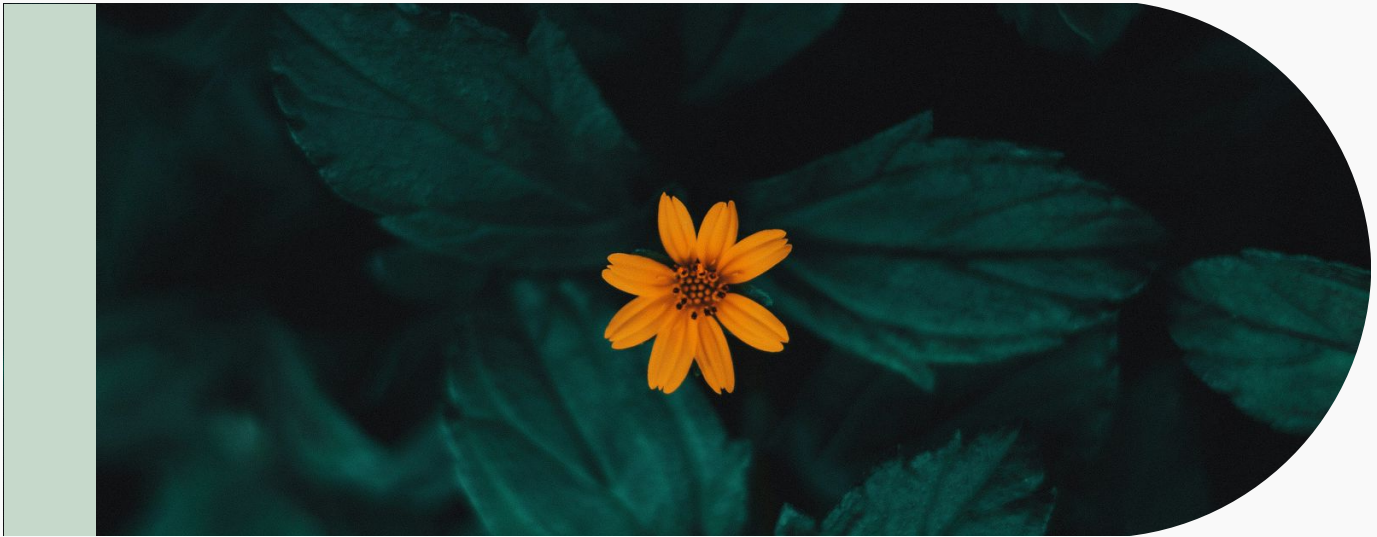
Here is a list of everyday experiences based on the Maladaptive Daydreaming Scale (Somer, Lehrfeld, Jopp, and Bigelsen 2016; Somer, Soffer-Dudek, Ross, and Halpern 2017):

- Extensive, vivid fantasy storylines imbued with a powerful sense of presence.
- Daydreaming is perceived as highly rewarding.
- Preference for daydreaming over most other activities.
- Mouthing, vocal noises, or facial expressions often accompany daydreaming.
- Daydreaming is frequently accompanied by physical activity, such as pacing, swinging, or shaking hands.

The 16-item Maladaptive Daydreaming Scale (MDS-16) can be downloaded here: <http://tinyurl.com/ypcp4jk7>.

To download the Structured Clinical Interview for Maladaptive Daydreaming (SCIMD) (Somer, Soffer-Dudek, Ross and Halpern 2017) go to: <http://tinyurl.com/bde8tkk8>.





# How to Identify MD?

The most reliable tool for screening for Maladaptive Daydreaming (MD) is the self-report MDS-16. Scores of 40 or higher on the original English version of the measure indicate probable MD. To determine if a patient meets the suggested diagnostic criteria for MD, they must be interviewed by a clinician with the SCIMD to determine if they have experienced vivid fantasies with detailed storylines for at least six months and report that this fantasy activity has been persistent or recurrent. Patients must also meet at least one characteristic MD feature outlined in the SCIMD and experience distress and/or dysfunction associated with daydreaming. It is also essential to rule out any other diagnosis that could explain the symptoms.

For further information on MD assessment, go to the International Consortium for Maladaptive Daydreaming Research (ICMDR) website, which is listed in the "Resources" section of this pamphlet.





# Management Strategies:

Research has shown promising results in the treatment of Maladaptive Daydreaming. An 8 week online program which included Mindfulness and self-monitoring improved by 40% helped over 1 in 3 participants. \*

## Mindfulness

"The mindfulness module included the following submodules: mindfulness psychoeducation, attention, and acceptance, working with the daydreaming mind, being "present when unpleasant," and turning toward difficult emotions. The following techniques were included: 3-min breathing space, body scan, breath-sound-body meditation, mindful eating, mindful walking, mindfulness in daily-life activities, mindful movement, and MBSR yoga exercise."

## Self-Monitoring

"The self-monitoring module provided information on the importance of monitoring and how participants would benefit from it. We collected a daily daydreaming time report and administered a daily "Daydreaming diary" that facilitated the detection of triggers and gaged the urge to daydream, the duration of daydreaming, and any alternative responses employed. To keep our data within the scope of this trial, we used the diary data only to inspect the rate of compliance with the monitoring procedure."

\*Herscu, O., Somer, E., Ferderman, A., & Soffer-Dudek, N. (2023, Jan 12) Mindfulness Meditation and Self-Monitoring Reduced Maladaptive Daydreaming Symptoms: A Randomized Controlled Trial of a Brief Self-Guided Web-Based Program. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology.





## Resources

- International Consortium for Maladaptive Daydreaming  
Research [daydreamresearch.wixsite.com/md-research](http://daydreamresearch.wixsite.com/md-research)

- International Society for Maladaptive Daydreaming  
[maladaptivedaydreamingsociety.com](http://maladaptivedaydreamingsociety.com)

Wild Minds Network  
[wildminds.ning.com](http://wildminds.ning.com)

Maladaptive Daydreaming Center  
[maladaptivedaydreamingcenter.org](http://maladaptivedaydreamingcenter.org)

The Daydream Place  
[daydreamplace.com](http://daydreamplace.com)

[maladaptivedaydreamingsociety.com](http://maladaptivedaydreamingsociety.com)

