

# Signs & Symptoms

- Prolonged periods of time during the day dedicated to vivid, immersive daydreaming fantasies
- Elaborate, detailed, and complex fantasy worlds and scenarios, comparable to an intricate plotline of a novel or movie
- Repetitive movements such as pacing, rocking, leg bouncing, gesturing, or fidgeting with an object while daydreaming
- Facial expressions and physical acting out that mirrors the imagined actions, events or emotions of the fantasy (smiling, frowning, laughing, crying)
- Need for background music to facilitate the imagined scenario and evoke related emotions
- Difficulty disengaging from the fantasy world or an uncontrollable urge to continue and resume daydreaming (similar to addiction withdrawal)
- Struggling to fall asleep at bedtime or difficulty getting out of bed in the morning due to an intense desire to continue the fantasy before sleep or upon waking

The hallmarks of immersive daydreaming described above are regarded as maladaptive when in addition to them, at least one of the following two conditions exist:

- Neglecting real life obligations like school/work, relationships, hygiene, or essential tasks due to an overwhelming preference for the fantasy life over reality
- Feelings of distress, irritation, or moodiness when the fantasy is interrupted and one has to come back to reality

## Resources

### International Society for Maladaptive Daydreaming

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

### International Consortium for Maladaptive Daydreaming Research

## Understanding Maladaptive Daydreaming



# Maladaptive Daydreaming Defined



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

Boiled down, Maladaptive Daydreaming is daydreaming that interferes with someone's life. This often comes in the form of 'yearning' for daydreams, prioritizing time to daydream over real

## Your MD could be...

- A coping skill gone awry
- A behavioral addiction
- An escape from bleak circumstances
- An attempt to regulate emotions

## What Can Help?

**Self-Monitoring:** Track time spent daydreaming daily to build awareness

**Self-Motivation:** Explore the pros and cons of continuing extensive daydreaming versus cutting back to motivate change

**Mindfulness:** Practice focusing your awareness on present moment sensations, thoughts, feelings to remain grounded in reality



**Seek Providers:** Find mental health professionals experienced in treating behavioral addictions that drive compulsive daydreaming

**Explore Root Causes:** Underlying emotional pain or life problems may be causing self-medicated through immersive fantasizing. Consider contributing factors like Stress, trauma, lack of life direction, or family dynamics that feed into excessive, compulsive daydreaming.

Building insight into why daydreams are so compelling can help uncover what needs are being met so healthier coping strategies can be developed over time

