

Maladaptive daydreaming may be a better diagnosis for some than ADHD

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Maladaptive daydreaming (MD) may be a better diagnosis for some people than ADHD, according to a new study by Ben-Gurion University of the Negev researchers, in collaboration with the University of Haifa.

MD is a condition whereby people slip into involved highly detailed and realistic daydreams that can last hours at the cost of normal functioning. It has not yet been recognized as a formal psychiatric syndrome.

However, Dr. Nirit Soffer-Dudek of the Consciousness and Psychopathology Laboratory in the Department of Psychology at BGU is one of the foremost experts on the condition and is hoping to get MD added to the next edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM VI), by promoting rigorous research on the subject.

"Some individuals who become addicted to their fanciful daydreams experience great difficulty in concentrating and focusing their attention on academic and vocational tasks, yet they find that an ADHD diagnosis and the subsequent treatment plan does not necessarily help them. Formally classifying MD as a [mental disorder](#) would enable psychological practitioners to better assist many of their patients," says Dr. Soffer-Dudek.

Previous studies had found high levels of ADHD in those also presenting with MD, thereby raising the question of whether MD was separate from ADHD. In the current study, published recently in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, doctoral candidate Ms. Nitzan Theodor-Katz, together with Dr. Soffer-Dudek and their colleagues from the University of Haifa, assessed 83 adults diagnosed with ADHD for inattention symptoms, MD, depression, loneliness, and self-esteem. Of those, about 20% met the proposed [diagnostic criteria](#) for MD, with significantly higher rates of depression, loneliness, and lowered [self-esteem](#), compared to those with ADHD that did not meet criteria for MD.

"Our findings suggest that there is a subgroup of those diagnosed with ADHD who would benefit more from a diagnosis of MD," says Dr. Soffer-Dudek.

More information: Nitzan Theodor-Katz et al, Could immersive daydreaming underlie a deficit in attention? The prevalence and characteristics of maladaptive daydreaming in individuals with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, *Journal of Clinical Psychology* (2022). [DOI: 10.1002/jclp.23355](https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.23355)

Provided by Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

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