

Daydreaming—You Are Doing It Wrong. How To Make Your Fantasies More Productive

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Daydreaming often gets a bad rap. In a world focused on being as efficient and productive as possible, distracted mind wandering seems like a blatant waste of time.

Fantasies alone can actually be de-motivating. If you dream of an ideal future, you experience some of the pleasure of having that future just because you're dreaming about it. It is hard to be too motivated to work to change yourself when you are already feeling good about your life.

But fantasies about the future (say, your dream job) can be motivating if you use them in the right way. Gabriele Oettingen and her colleagues at NYU have been studying the role of fantasies in goal achievement for decades. It turns out there are two key steps to using fantasies to your advantage.

First, of course, you need to envision your future. That is generally the part you are good at: How much money you'd like to make, the exciting, meaningful projects you'd work on, the awards and recognition you'd receive . . . the vacations you'd take. the salary you'll have, and the other perks to the promotion.

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