

Happy Thoughts Can Make You Sad

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Pacific Standard:

The secret to success, we are sometimes told, is the power of positive thinking. In fact, there's a famous book devoted to that idea called, appropriately, *The Power of Positive Thinking*, and there's a similarly themed book called *The Secret*. But there's another secret, according to new research: Fantasizing about a wonderful, happy future may actually make depression symptoms worse in the long run.

It's not that positive thinking is entirely bad for you, psychologists Gabriele Oettingen, Doris Mayer, and Sam Portnow write in *Psychological Science*. Indeed, in the short run, there's some evidence that daydreaming about good things can curtail symptoms of depression. At the same time, fantasies might actually set you up for failure—you think about the good things, but don't put in any effort to get them, then feel worse for not having achieved anything. The question Oettingen, Mayer, and Portnow ask: Could dreams of a happy future actually leave you more depressed down the road?

Read the whole story: [Pacific Standard](#)