

The Origins of Positive-Constructive Daydreaming

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Once accused of being absent-minded, the founder of American Psychology, William James, quipped that he was really just present-minded to his own thoughts. William James didn't just live in his own head, but he also studied the phenomenon, coining the term "stream of thought" in 1890. In his famous textbook *Principles of Psychology*, he opened an early chapter with the following: "We now begin our study of the mind from within". He clearly saw the internal stream of consciousness as an important topic within psychology.

Daydreaming may be regarded as a feature of William James' stream of thought. It is characterized by a shift of attention away from focusing on a physical or mental task to a series of thoughts derived from long-term memory (often taking a narrative form). Daydreaming may be regarded as falling within the general phenomenon of mind-wandering except that much of mind-wandering may be characterized by shifts of attention from an already ongoing task towards new sensory reactions in the individual's physical, social, or bodily environment rather than towards one's thoughts derived ultimately from long term memory.

Read the full story: [*Scientific American*](#)