

Why Mind Wandering Can Be So Miserable, According to Happiness Experts

March 07, 2017

Smithsonian:

For you, it could be the drive home on the freeway in stop-and-go traffic, a run without headphones or the time it takes to brush your teeth. It's the place where you're completely alone with your thoughts—and it's terrifying. For me, it's the shower.

...

Killingsworth and Gilbert tested their app on a few thousand subjects to find that people's minds tended to wander 47 percent of the time. Looking at 22 common daily activities including working, shopping and exercising, they found that people's minds wandered the least during sex (10 percent of the time) and the most during grooming activities (65 percent of the time)—including taking a shower. In fact, the shower appears to be especially prone to mind wandering because it requires relatively little thought compared to something like cooking.

...

In some cases, mind wandering does serve a purpose. Our minds might “scan the internal or external environment for things coming up we may have to deal with,” says Claire Zedelius, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of California at Santa Barbara who works in the lab of mind wandering expert Jonathan Schooler. Mind wandering may also be linked to certain kinds of creativity, and in particular to a creativity “incubation period” during which our minds are busy coming up with ideas, Schooler's lab has found.

Read the whole story: [Smithsonian](#)