

DAY DREAMING

By Margaret McArthur

I have a little saying that states “Don’t ask me to stay in step, it is hard enough for me to stay in line”.

When first asked to give this talk I was asked for a topic and its title. The first thing that I said unthinkingly was the “importance of daydreaming”, I was of course unaware at the time how difficult it would be to put down in words the pros and cons of such an abstract concept as daydreaming.

This led me when, talking about day dreaming, to use the five W rule: - who, what, when, where and why. These five words can be applied to any topic you want to explore.

Who day dreams, research shows that 96% of the adult population day dream on a regular basis, most are unaware that they are doing it. Many people use day dreaming consciously and constructively. Here is a quote by Jenson Button a famous racing car driver - *‘My school reports always used to point out that my concentration levels were appalling. I never listened in class because I was always daydreaming about car racing. I never thought for a moment about doing anything else. There was no guarantee that I’d make a career in it, but I never had any pal B’.*

When I read that it reminded me of myself. I didn’t like school and I pretty much daydreamed all the time. I would sit at the back of the class and think random thoughts that had nothing to do with school. Therefore it was not surprising that I did not do well at school and struggled getting through exams.

My old school reports always stated that I could do better if I stopped daydreaming and applied myself. But it was through daydreaming that I could make sense of things and remember things. I would imagine all sorts of things especially history and geography. I would create stories with corresponding pictures to capture what was important to me. Staring out the window wondering what the places would be like and thinking how one day I would go and explore exotic lands, which I did manage to achieve in my early twenties.

Remember when I was young, and probably when most of you were young, we did not have TV, or other electronic gadgets, that take you to these places. We had to rely on our own imagination.

All of my young life, all I heard from teachers, parents, my older siblings and even friends, was “stop daydreaming and get on with (whatever I was supposed to be doing) or stop daydreaming you will end up hurting yourself, or you will never accomplish anything unless you stop daydreaming and get on with things.

Children are excellent daydreamers until they are trained to think linearly, logically and factually instead of imaginatively, they are taught to read slowly and carefully and are discouraged from daydreaming and using their imagination.

I did not realize that all the daydreaming that I was doing when young was what set up my success later in life. It gave me an understanding and a way of exploring new topics, new ways of doing things and explains my interest not so much in the past, but in the future. Remember that what was science fiction in my younger days have not become everyday occurrences.

Let us now explore how daydreaming has been defined.

What is daydreaming: - It has been defined as a short term detachment from our immediate situation, where our contact with reality is interrupted and blurred and partially substituted by a visionary fantasy, especially happy, pleasant thoughts, hopes and ambitions. Daydreaming can be done with either the eyes open or closed.

Daydreaming is necessary for good mental health for it is the process by which our logical mind can be escaped for a short period and able to rest. Day dreaming is a good way of getting out of the rut when our logical thinking gets stuck, for it activates our imagination our “image maker” as it opens a space where we can let go of our logic, discernment and judgment allowing time and brain-space for new thoughts, new ideas to spring forth without automatically dismissing them as ill-logical.. It is like a detox for our cluttered academic brain.

We get ideas from daydreaming, from being bored, we get ideas all the time, but the difference between people who use those ideas and others is their power of observation and noticing when it is

being done. Writers, poets, artists, and inventors all use the power of their imagination, which they contact through the use of daydreaming. To escape the stigma of being called a 'no hoper daydreamer' many use the term contemplation to explain away their ability to daydream.

All of us have the ability to access new ideas, new thought patterns, the difference between people is that some are able to release the shackles of their logical thinking and become aware of what appears to others as the impossible and accept these new thoughts and ideas as a possibility.

Daydreaming is a skill that can be learned and cultivated in our every-day life to solve what first appear to be insurmountable problems. Day dreaming allows us to play out scenarios where we miraculously save the day. To play scenarios in our heads that are kind of crazy, and then you personally heroically resolve them. In kinesiology we do role-playing with our clients. Role playing is a form of active day dreaming, which is why some clients can find it very difficult to participate in fully, because they cannot see or think of anything but what is their current reality.

Excessive daydreaming where one lives in fantasy and does not accept their reality is a mental health condition and is described by psychologists as 'Dissociation' or 'Detachment', the turning away from reality in favour of living in a fantasy world.

Years ago I found that if I didn't get my housework or jobs done first and out of the way they either didn't get done or took me forever. I would easily get distracted because I would get caught up in, and become distracted by my thoughts or creative ideas, my fantasies.

Where and when can we do daydreaming:- Anywhere, anytime as long as we are not in a space or time that requires full concentration and awareness. Why do people daydream:- It is to escape the stress of everyday life. Some people use the distraction of TV, listening to music or the radio especially shows that don't require any concentration. How many times have you asked your partner what they are watching or listening too and they say I have no idea, they have probably been daydreaming. You can often tell when people are daydreaming because they will often answer you in a very distracted way and if you see their eyes there is a far-away look instead of interest and excitement in what they are observing or doing.

The benefits of daydreaming are that it relaxes not only the mind, but also our physical bodies, it helps to reduce pain and stress, and opens the mind to possible solutions to problems one may be experiencing.

People have often commented that daydreaming is no different from visualization or meditation although daydreaming, visualization and meditation appear to be similar and share similar benefits they are quite different in their approaches.

Daydreaming is freedom: it is about letting go and allowing the mind to be free of boundaries or restrictions, it is an outward flowing energy that activates our desires and builds faith and confidence in possibilities and ourselves for the future.

Visualisation has been described as "*daydreaming with a purpose*". It is all about focus. In visualization it is about holding one particular thought and image connected to a feeling without the intrusion or distraction of other thoughts for 16 seconds. Visualisation helps us to stay focused and to set goals to achieve a particular project. Visualisation builds the energy for achieving and bringing into reality a possibility.

Meditation means to meditate, to meditate between our lower and higher aspirations. Meditation is an inward focused energy. It is about centering, connection and alignment. Meditation is about accessing our life's purpose or life's path and spiritual aspirations and energies. Meditation aligns our spiritual and material aspirations. Without alignment the path to achievement is fraught with disappointment and obstacles, it does not run smoothly. When you desire, focus and goals are in alignment with your highest good then things run smoothly and you achieve in your life.

Daydreaming is about letting go of perceived obstacles and generating desire and new dreams.

Visualization is about concentration and will power accepting the new possibility as a reality.

Meditation is about alignment of our daydreams with a new reality, and maintaining alignment of our desires, thoughts and aspirations for the future.

All three have similar benefits in that they can reduce blood pressure, pain and stress and increase physical and mental relaxation and energy, and help to open up new pathways of thought which can lead to a new found self-confidence, self-belief and can help us to achieve in life.

We cannot just be daydreamers we need to be aware daydreamers and be able to decide what is the most important desire at the time, and be able to visualize the outcome we want and then make sure it is in alignment with our higher spiritual aspect.

Take the attitude of the student, never be too big to ask questions, never know too much to learn something new. Believe in yourself, have faith in your skills and abilities. Be humble but keep a reasonable confidence in your own powers, if others knock you let it go, for you cannot be successful or happy unless you believe in yourself. Let the mental clutter go and clear the mind so that you are able to let in the calls from nature and the universe.

Address given by Margaret at the 2017 Conference of the Kinesiology Association.