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Daydreaming has always had reputation, but now scientific research has revealed that daydreaming may actually improve your mental health and creativity. It can even help you achieve your desired goals.

Daydream a Little Eugene Raudsepp "Daydreaming again, Barb? You'll never amount to anything if you spend your time that way! Can't you find something useful to do?" Many youngsters have heard words like those from their parents. And until recently this hostile attitude towards daydreaming was the most common one.

Daydreaming was viewed as a waste of time. Or it was considered an unhealthy escape from real life and its duties. But now some people are taking a fresh look at daydreaming. Some think it may be a very healthy thing to do. Attitudes towards daydreaming are changing in much the same way that attitudes towards night dreaming have changed. Once it was thought that nighttime dreams interfered with our needed rest. But then researchers tried interrupting the dreams of sleepers. They learned that sleepers who aren't allowed to dream lost the benefits of rest. They become tense and anxious. They become irritable. They have trouble concentrating. Their mental health is temporarily damaged. To feel well again, they must be allowed to dream. Now researchers are finding that daydreaming may also be important to mental health. Daydreaming, they tell us, is a good means of relaxation. But its

benefits go beyond this. A number of psychologists have conducted experiments and have reached some surprising conclusions. Dr. Joan T. Freyberg has concluded that daydreaming contributes to intellectual growth. It also improves concentration, attention span, and the ability to get along with others, she says. In an experiment with school children, this same researcher found that daydreaming led the children to pay more attention to detail. They had more happy feelings. They worked together better. Another researcher reported that daydreaming seemed to produce improved self-control and creative abilities. But that's only part of the story. The most remarkable thing about daydreaming may be its usefulness in shaping our future lives as we want them to be. Industrialist Henry J. Kaiser believed that much of his success was due to the positive use of daydreaming. He maintained that "you can imagine your future." Florence Nightingale dreamed of becoming a nurse. The young Thomas Edison pictured himself as an inventor. For these notable achievers, it appears that their daydreams came true. Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick believed that the way we picture ourselves is often the way we turn out. He offered this advice: "Hold a picture of yourself ... in your mind's eye, and you will be drawn toward it. Picture yourself vividly as defeated, and that will make victory impossible. Picture yourself as winning, and that will contribute immeasurably to success. Do not picture yourself as anything, and you will drift" The experiences of some athletes seem to confirm this belief. For instance, John Uelses, a former pole-vaulting champion, used daydreaming techniques before each meet. He

would imagine himself winning. He would vividly picture himself clearing the bar at a certain height. He would go over all the details in his mind. He would picture the stadium and the crowds. He'd even imagine the smell of the grass and the earth. He said that this exercise of the imagination left memory traces in his mind that would later help his actual performance. Why would a mental vision of success help produce real success? Dr. Maxwell Maltz, a surgeon and author, says this: "Your nervous system cannot tell the difference between an imagined experience and real experience. In either case it reacts automatically to information that you give it It reacts appropriately to what you think or imagine to be true." He believes that purposeful daydreaming builds new "memories" in the brain. These positive memories improve a person's self-image. And self-image has an important effect on a person's action and accomplishments.

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