

## HERE'S WHAT'S HAPPENING

### Check Out the New Reasons to Live Video

Were you at Flu Fest last year?  
Did you visit our Photo Booth?  
Then chances are you're in the [video](#)!!!!

Check out all 100 Reasons to Live submitted by the Jefferson Community.

While you're there, type some of your own and help us reach our goal of **2013** reasons!

### Active Minds Event

[Active Minds](#), a student organization dedicated to erasing the stigma of mental illness, is planning to have a speaker from [Minding Your Mind](#) on Thursday, October 3. We'd love your help in making this a great event for the Jefferson community! If you're interested in joining in the planning, contact [Swarna Debbarma](#).



### Monthly Poll Question



What kinds of things do you do to relax?

[Click here to vote!](#)

### Last Month's Poll Results



45% of you are very likely, and 35% are somewhat likely to go online to find mental health resources.

# RESOURCE OF THE MONTH

## The Value of Daydreaming

I love my commute in the morning, and I'm not being sarcastic. I take the train to work every day, and it's usually the only time I get to just sit there and do nothing. Many mornings, I have been intentional about not looking at any smart phone or tablet device and just sitting there, looking out the window, or zoning out on nothing at all. More often than not, it turns out to be a very productive part of my day. Even if all that I accomplish is to let myself have some time off, it gives me the ability to transition into my day. During this time, I've found that I love the view of the Philadelphia Museum of Art from the train window. It's almost like looking at the art itself, and it's a part of my day I've come to treasure. Other times, I find myself with ideas for how to accomplish my goals for the day (like this article for example), or it turns into a creative brainstorm for future projects I'd like to take on. And more often than not, I get motivated to jump into accomplishing all that the day has for me.

For many, time to slow down and relax is a foreign concept. It can bring up feelings of guilt of unaccomplished tasks. Or perhaps we don't slow down due to competitiveness; a sense that time off is allowing someone else to get ahead. However, giving our minds a rest can have benefits both to our mental health, as well as to our productivity.

Neurologists have mapped the areas of the brain that are stimulated when our mind is at wakeful rest and term this area the Default Mode Network (DMN). The DMN consists of areas of the hippocampus (the brain's "search engine" for short term to long term memory, involved in brain function necessary for planning the future and generating creative ideas), the posterior cingulate (involved in processing emotional memory), and the medial prefrontal cortex (aids in cognitive processing, such as planning, problem solving, verbal reasoning, etc.). There is some debate as to the full benefits of daydreaming, and more research needs to be done, but here are some of the ways it aids our overall health and wellness.

### *Time to Relax*

When the DMN is active, during daydreaming, other parts of the brain are at rest. This may be why we often feel refreshed after even small periods of time "zoning out".

### *Social role playing/mental visualization*

Have you ever come out of a daydream and think, "Why in the world would I ever want to do that?" This is your mind playing out a situation without actually engaging in that activity. We also play out scenarios in our head in order to be in a state of mental readiness to respond. This has been shown to help athletes and surgeons who mentally visualize themselves working out different strategies in their head.

### *Creativity*

Daydreaming can feel like we're watching a show, or we may even be conscious of creating scenarios in our head. Many creative people, like authors or playwrights, had imaginary friends as children, and that daydreaming time was used to develop elaborate stories that we enjoy reading about or watching.

### *Processing/planning/problem solving*

When we are first given a task, we may have initial thoughts about how to carry out that task, but the fullness of our plan is not quite known. These times of indirect thinking allow our brains to process information and plan what's next. This often leads to that “aha” moment, when it seems a “light clicks on” in our brain, and we've figured out the solution.

### *Emotional “check-in”*

The question, “How are you?” is thrown around like the word, “hello”, and often the person isn't actually asking you how you are doing. In fact the polite response is, “Fine, and you?” We also do this with ourselves; we go throughout our day, not completely noticing our inner emotional well-being. However, during our daydreams, our feelings or thoughts about how we are doing, often come to the surface, and allow us that emotional check-in that we need.

Take advantage of down times to allow your mind the rest and processing time it needs. The next time you are waiting in line, sitting on a train, or waiting for a friend to show up, try not to take out your electronic device. Instead, do nothing at all; except daydream.

*But, can daydreaming cause problems or be a symptom of another problem?*

Again, for many of us, our struggle is allowing ourselves the time to disengage with our surroundings. However, for some, daydreaming can be a time of reliving bad memories. Or, perhaps you find yourself obsessively daydreaming to the point where it is affecting your quality of life. For some, daydreaming may reflect a difficulty with concentration - which can be a symptom of depression, anxiety, attention deficit, or other psychological condition. If you find yourself using daydreaming to procrastinate, especially if it's to the point where you aren't getting your work done, it may be a sign of something you need to address. Or, if daydreaming is turning into rumination about past events in your life - particularly things you can't change, perhaps it would help to talk with someone about this. For Jefferson students, the Student Personal Counseling Center is a great resource, staffed with caring and qualified counselors; please call 5-HELP to make an appointment. For Jefferson employees, you may also call 5-HELP to get connected to FirstCALL, which is staffed live by qualified consultants who can connect you to face-to-face or telephonic counseling services.

*Written by [Rose Milani](#), Project Coordinator, [JeffHELP](#), Thomas Jefferson University.*

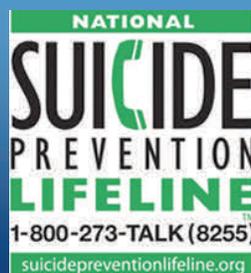
For more information @ [JeffHELP](#) contact

Rose Milani

Project Coordinator

[jeffhelpinfo@jefferson.edu](mailto:jeffhelpinfo@jefferson.edu)

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