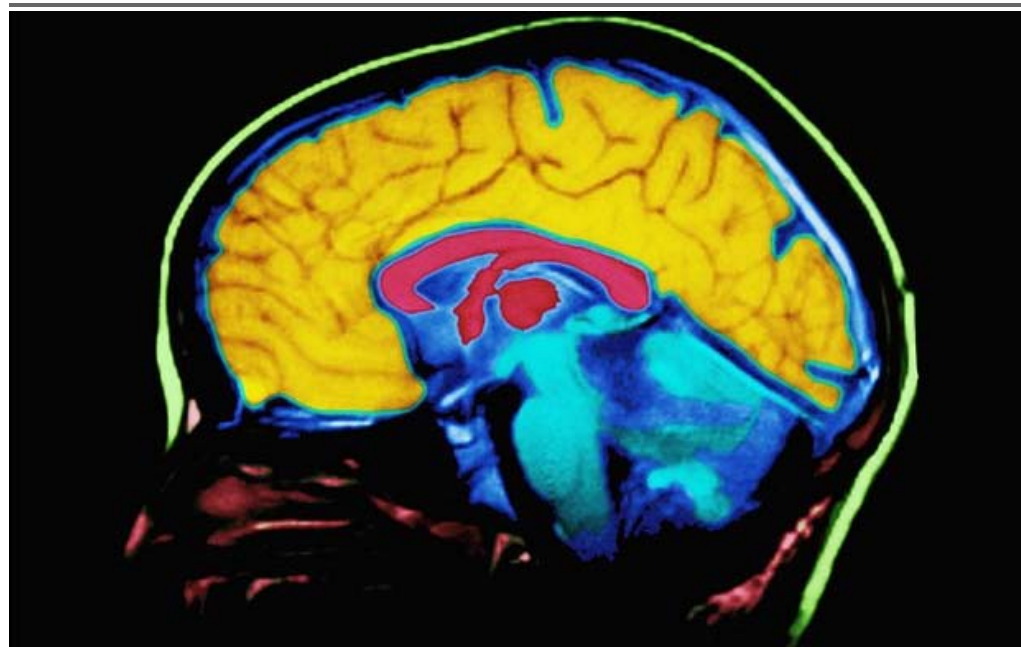


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Children whose minds wander 'have sharper brains'

Children whose minds wander might have sharper brains, research suggests.



The results appear to confirm previous research that found working memory allows humans to juggle multiple thoughts simultaneously. Photo: CORBIS

8:37PM GMT 16 Mar 2012

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A study has found that people who appear to be constantly distracted have more "working memory", giving them the ability to hold a lot of information in their heads and manipulate it mentally.

Children at school need this type of memory on a daily basis for a variety of tasks, such as following teachers' instructions or remembering dictated sentences.

During the study, volunteers were asked to perform one of two simple tasks during which researchers checked to ask if the participants' minds were wandering.

At the end, participants measured their working memory capacity by their ability to remember a series of letters interspersed with simple maths questions.

Daniel Levinson, a psychologist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the United States, said that those with higher working memory capacity reported "more mind wandering during these simple tasks", but their performance did not suffer.

The results, published online in the journal *Psychological Science*, appear to confirm previous research that found working memory allows

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humans to juggle multiple thoughts simultaneously.

Dr Jonathan Smallwood, of the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Science in Leipzig, Germany, said: "What this study seems to suggest is that, when circumstances for the task aren't very difficult, people who have additional working memory resources deploy them to think about things other than what they're doing."

Working memory capacity is also associated with general measures of intelligence, such as reading comprehension and IQ scores, and also offers a window into the widespread, but not well understood, realm of internally driven thoughts.

Dr Smallwood added: "Our results suggest the sorts of planning that people do quite often in daily life — when they are on the bus, when they are cycling to work, when they are in the shower — are probably supported by working memory.

"Their brains are trying to allocate resources to the most pressing problems."



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Are they sharp enough though to leak the truth about the coup and cover up using site like Wikileaks Facebook page? I doubt it.



truthtalk5
28 minutes ago

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of course...



Brenny Ganesan
Today 03:17 PM

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I read at one point that the average human brain works 7 times faster than human speech, which means there's plenty of cycles left for 'wandering'.
The issue is this. What about those kids whose minds wander but their performance suffers as a result?
The title misleadingly puts all 'wanderers' in the same category. Would be interesting to see the next level of detail on how exactly this pans out.



Just
Today 02:29 PM

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It's obvious watching "ADD" types around frustrated teachers.

The kids aren't too fast... the adults are just SLOW.



joe3945
Today 02:23 PM

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What? Sorry, was thinking of MW3 killshot I missed.



Dirk Chesterfield
Today 08:20 AM

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And we thought it was right to punish them and force them to take prescription drugs. Guess we were wrong all this time.

How many Einstein's have we lost? I always said we should have been on Mars by now.



challenger
Today 02:28 PM

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But we have to drug them senseless. Otherwise, how can they be cannon fodder for the politicians and lobby groups?



rupertmja
Today 07:45 AM

I'm sure a genius in the average class would get bored and start looking out of the window as if distracted. But that is not distraction. He's just bored. However, most kids are distracted because they are not interested in learning. They are kept in school because there are no jobs for them outside - it keeps the statistics down. Indeed, they are not even 'distracted', they are just not interested in learning. They need to leave but do not have the options we had 30 or 40 years ago, and the school system has a definite plan to keep them as long as possible.

(Edited by author 8 hours ago)

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Report



challenger
Today 02:30 PM

Meanwhile, a lot of the people that are not interested in learning hold that attitude because they are constantly bored out of their skulls by the topic, the content of lessons, and the incredibly slow pace of those lessons.

Recommend

Report



crownarmourer
Today 07:31 AM

Sorry what I wasn't paying attention.

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Report



cuttingthrough
Today 03:57 AM

To coral scores of young human beings of the same age together in the same room with a single adult for several hours between short breaks is the way we have traditionally controlled them during the day.

Some may want to be outside.

Recommended by 5 people

Recommend

Report



scouteliot
Today 03:24 AM

they must be corrected.

Recommended by 1 person

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Report



johnnyred
Today 03:18 AM

I don't know what it is like for other readers here but I grew up and continue to have the 'distraction' outlined above.

Like all cognitive processes there are some positives and some negatives. One negative is the constant internal dialogue that takes place even at night and throughout sleep.

One of the advantages is to clarify disparate information into a cohesive whole.

Recommended by 1 person

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Report



Jed Broshing
Today 02:45 AM

Their minds wander because they are bright, because they aren't challenged. Adult expectations for children are very low most of the time. Children are capable of far more than we think.

Recommended by 9 people

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Report



vegasdomar
Today 01:38 AM

I thought that was attention deficit disorder? Guess that's for the common folk.

Recommended by 5 people

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Drug all of them and we can watch as these kids are mentally torn apart.



mrcobaltblue
Today 12:28 AM

I've been working with and teaching high school aged kids for 26 years. Let me tell you, the "distracted" ones a definitely NOT "sharper". As far as their memory goes - the distracted one remember far less short term and long term because their distracted.

Report

Recommended by 2 people

Recommend

Report



cuttingthrough
Today 03:30 AM

You teach? Presumably not English.

Recommended by 11 people

Recommend

Report



seebee1
Today 12:45 AM

It depends what you mean by 'wander'. If it means constantly fidgeting, texting, facebooking through your touch sensitive ipad phone thingy in your pocket, then I suspect you may be right. If, on the other hand, it means someone who constantly finds themselves gazing at the marble mushrooming ether of the sky, and wondering if the Olympian gods ever did exist, or other gods and faces and monsters that are constantly emerging and merging, and making up stories about them in your head, when you should be doing maths; well, then maybe, just maybe the answer might be yes...

Recommended by 4 people

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Report



itzman
Today 02:07 AM

yep. That was me.

I learnt to be able to recall the exact words the teacher had said even when i wasn't paying attention - just left about 1% of the mind monitoring the lesson, as often it didn't even merit that.

Not sure what the teachers made of me - deep suspicion, but I passed all the sodding exams and got a scholarship to Cambridge,. so maybe they forgave me.

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Recommend

Report



docky
Today 12:30 AM

their distracted?

maybe it's because they're teacher is an idiott?

Recommended by 11 people

Recommend

Report



itzman
Today 02:18 AM

Teachers have to teach the class they have. Sometimes that class is not composed of budding Einsteins.

I can assure you its deeply dull to have 'teech' going over an explanation for 20 minutes that made more sense to you than him in the first 20 seconds.

Being distracted isn't always a sign of intelligence, but an intelligent person in a class of less intelligent people will always be looking for something else to occupy themselves.

My first headmaster, bless him, recognised that, and used to take me aside and teach me advanced maths. I had basic calculus

Recommended by 1 person

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Report

down pat at 11, which ruined me for maths because I didn't learn any more maths till I was studying for A levels, and by then I had got out of the habit of listening.

So I only have a sketchy understanding of tensor calculus or 'Hamiltonians' Sigh.

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H...> bust your balls on that lot...



beezdotcom
Today 02:56 AM

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"I can assure you its deeply dull to have 'teech' going over an explanation for 20 minutes that made more sense to you than him in the first 20 seconds."

Of course, sometimes that is because 'teech' doesn't really have that effective an approach to teaching. I have seen firsthand how one teacher can spend an entire class trying to explain something, to no avail - and another teacher can walk in and have the class understanding it in 60 seconds.



docky
Today 02:44 AM

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wiff.....



Vironmentalman
Today 12:26 AM

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This headline is rather misleading I think. The point is really that people with larger working memories have enough left over to let their minds wander when performing simple tasks. This research was conducted and replicated decades ago. The only news here is the unfounded implications drawn from the study.

(Edited by author 15 hours ago)



docky
Today 12:30 AM

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at young age intelligence and memory are near directly related.
make sense now?

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