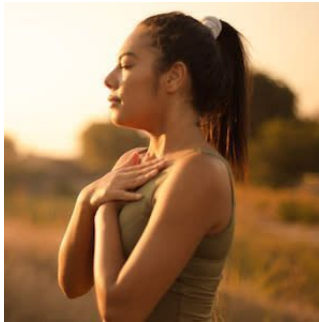

Put That Phone Down!



New research shows that people underestimate how much they would enjoy spending time alone with their own thoughts without anything to distract them. The research is published in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*.

The research shows that humans have the ability to immerse themselves in their own thinking but have difficulty appreciating just how engaging this might be. This might explain why most people today prefer to stay busy with devices and other distractions instead of taking a moment to reflect and imagine.

Researchers conducted six experiments with a total of 259 participants and compared predictions of how much they would enjoy sitting and thinking with their actual experience of doing so. For example, in the first experiment, participants had to predict how much they would enjoy sitting alone with their thoughts for 20 minutes without anything distracting such as reading, walking around or using a smartphone. This was followed by variations such as asking participants to sit in a bare conference room or a small, dark tented area with no visual stimulation; the thinking period from three minutes to 20 minutes; variation in which participants were asked to report on their enjoyment midway instead of after the task was over.

The first experiment showed that people enjoyed spending time with their thoughts significantly more than they had predicted. These findings held true across all the variations of the experiment.

In another experiment, the researchers compared one group's predictions of how much they would enjoy thinking with another group's predictions of how much they would enjoy checking the news on the internet. Results show that the thinking group expected to enjoy the task significantly less than the news-checking group, but after the activity, both groups reported similar enjoyment levels.

These findings are especially relevant today as most people are constantly distracted with their smartphones and other devices and are inundated with information. Most people use their phones on the bus rather than immerse themselves in free-floating thinking. This is because they think they will be bored. But that is not the case, as this study shows.

By constantly occupying ourselves with devices, we miss the opportunity to positively engage ourselves without stimulation. Letting our minds wander and spending some time with our thoughts can have benefits. It can help solve problems, increase creativity and bring meaning to life. So what are you waiting for? Put that phone down!

Source: [American Psychological Association](#)

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