

THE DAYDREAMER

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Newsletter for Maladaptive Daydreamers

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Seven Tips on Telling Friends and Family About Maladaptive Daydreaming

By Kristen Fitzgerald, Co-Editor

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Rebecca's Story

By Rebecca Griffiths

My name is...

...Rebecca Madeleine Green, but I'm known as Becci. Becci Green is a bizarrely common name for a global superstar, but somehow it makes it even more understated and cool.

I was one of those children who was talented at everything! My late mother Bella was a socialite and fashion designer, achingly hip and beautiful but I'll be honest – terrible at parenting – so I was practically raised by my older brother Nathan and sister Saskia.

Story continued on page 4

Show Off Your Work!

Many of us with Maladaptive Daydreaming Disorder are highly creative. We would love to feature pictures of any artwork, photography, or an other creative pursuits!

Please submit artwork for consideration at:
support@maladaptiveaydreamers.com

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Seven Tips on Telling Friends and Family About Maladaptive Daydreaming

By Kristen Fitzgerald, Co-Editor

I had known I was a Maladaptive Daydreamer for years before I decided to tell anyone in my real life. I had been active in the community for close to a decade, so I felt pretty confident when I finally brought it up with friends. I got a variety of responses and somehow few of them were what I expected and my confidence in discussing MD with the people I was closest to was smashed even though none of them were particularly negative.

One close friend tried to comfort and empower me by insisting, "Hey, that's amazing, I wish I had that. Don't you let anyone tell you it's a problem!" My sister seemed to understand and even looked at some of the links I had sent her. I had thought that went well until two years later when she started asking me about DID, which she was under the impression I had told her I had. My partner was very supportive, but even so it was a long time before he realised how MD really touched every aspect of my life, and even our life together.

Talking about MD is tricky, there's no great body of literature we can rely on (though there is a nice bank of preliminary studies) and no clinicians who can diagnose us. One study on MD found that 82% of participants had gone to great lengths to hide their daydreaming (Bigelsen & Schupak 2011). To your friends or family it may look like someone perfectly 'normal' has suddenly 'decided' they have a disorder for no apparent reason, or that you are misinterpreting a normal behavior as disordered since you may outwardly display few negative symptoms.

Through a bit of trial and error, and leaning on the community to find ways to be effectively understood, here are a few things I've found that might help you to best prepare for this conversation:

1

The best thing you can do is educate yourself. There are a number of sites and communities run by maladaptive daydreamers with the purpose of bringing our experiences together and supporting one another. You can also flip through the International Consortium of Maladaptive Daydreaming Research website to find peer-reviewed studies and measures. The more you know, the better you will be able to advocate for yourself.

2

Write out what you'd like to say in the form of a letter. No one ever has to read this letter. It's just a good tool for organizing your thoughts and making sure everything that needs to be said gets its chance. Write rebuttals to yourself, answers to questions that may come up and a description of what you are experiencing. Go over why it's important and what you want to do about it.

3

While explaining MD, stick to the facts. Talk about how it makes you feel and how it is affecting your life. You don't need to include details about your daydreaming, as they are simply not that important. Daydreaming details may be helpful to explore in therapy but in this initial conversation they are next to useless and will only bog down a conversation. Instead, focus on how the daydreaming is impairing your life, how it's different from normal daydreaming and the difficulty you have limiting it.

Explaining that these are imaginary fantasy worlds that you feel trapped in and consumed with instead of just ordinary daydreaming that one can walk away from might help the person you are telling understand that MD is different from the more typical daydreaming that everyone does.

4

Think about why it's important to you that this person knows. Perhaps they are easy to talk to, or you feel they can relate, or you live in close quarters, maybe they control your access to healthcare? Why is it important to you that they take this seriously? You're under no obligation to educate anyone, it is perfectly ok to walk away from this conversation and let them believe what they like.

5

Have an action plan ready; talk about what they can do to help. Having a way forward dispenses with some of the anxiety of "I don't know what to do about this, why are you telling me?" And keep trying...They might not "get it". "You're just creative.", "Everyone does that." Try not to get frustrated, fighting tends to make people dig in and can damage your chances at getting caregivers on board. If you are a minor you might consider approaching other trusted adults such as teachers, counselors or clergy who can help you talk to your parents or custodians about therapy. Don't feel like you haven't made progress if you need to table this topic and revisit it later; the seed is planted.

6

Provide them with studies or articles that best explain your experience -- (which they can digest at their own pace)! Show them some of the media and academic articles on Maladaptive Daydreaming Disorder so they see that it is a real disorder currently under study and not something you are making up. There are peer-reviewed studies listed on the ICMDR and articles which have been published in reputable journals and magazines. Choose a few that highlight which aspects of this are important to you and who you are telling.

7

And finally, don't fall into the trap of trying to validate MD. They may believe it's an issue, they may not. At any rate it is up to science to provide the proof, your only concern should be your own health. Sometimes that means not telling someone something. Perhaps you may even need to leave the "daydreaming" out of it and describe it as a compulsive or attentive dysfunction. It may be helpful to talk about MD as something which is better understood (OCD-spectrum or ADHD, for example). This might be more readily accepted and could be more likely to end in getting you the help or support you need.

“EVERY CONVERSATION, EVERY FAILURE,
EVERY OPPORTUNITY IS A CHANCE TO GET
BETTER. STARTING TODAY.”

- GARY W. GOLDSTEIN

Rebecca's Story

By Rebecca Griffiths

Continued...

When I was a teenager, I could have been a singing star. I also danced to almost a professional level and had trails of the best-looking boys making eyes at me. I was fixed on Olympic stardom in swimming and trained for that day-in day-out, until one day a terrible accident forced me to reassess my whole life.

Some might have been deterred by almost fatal injury, however over the past few years I have forged a successful Hollywood career, recently accepting a Best Actress Oscar and a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. I've modelled for leading brands, hosted my own TV show and raised millions for charity through my foundation.

At the heart of it has been my husband, James. Since we met when I was seventeen, recovering from terrible injuries, he has helped me discover exactly who I am and has been by my side ever since. We have six children, three dogs and have spent an amazing life spent travelling the globe.

My real name is...

.... Rebecca (though I'm definitely not a Becci). I've been married for 15 years, have two lovely little boys, a good degree, run my own successful PR company and, on the outside, have great friends and a lovely life.

I've also managed to keep up the façade well as I suffer from Maladaptive Daydreaming Disorder.

For the past few years I have been sure that I have been exactly what the acronym spells – MD – as I have been Becci Green now for over 25 years - living her life and the lives of many of her friends, siblings and children. I could write extensive family trees for all of the characters in my head, their back stories and deepest emotions. For a few years I even used to keep a daily diary as Becci, documenting everything she was doing, thinking and feeling! There is nothing wrong with daydreaming my mum always said, never vaguely aware of the pain my 'daydreams' have caused.

How it Started

Maladaptive Daydreamers I am told, are often creative and intelligent. I was definitely a creative child as I used to spend hours in my room writing novels, imagining dramatic, soap-like scenarios in my head which were so much more interesting than my own life. I can never pretend I had a bad life (in fact I had a great childhood), however I was not a popular 'girly' girl who had loads of friends, trendy clothes and boyfriends. I lived a very safe life, doing safe things, in a safe town, with my safe family and suffered from bad anxiety even as a child.

I remember lying in bed when I was thirteen years old wondering if it was possible to mentally become someone else more interesting and confident. When I conjured Becci into existence she was 15 years old and stunning (unlike me) and I remember imagining myself as her - walking down the leafy street to her enormous house one autumn day, watching her feet become my feet, as I lay on the bed with my eyes closed. Since that day to me, she has been a living breathing human, as real as myself (even though I do know she is not real at all). I love her with my whole heart. I love my dream (ex) husband, who I have known intimately longer than most people in my life, and all of my dream children, who I carried through imaginary pregnancy.

How it continued

Imagining Becci's life may sound like a lovely escapist fantasy, however being a maladaptive daydreamer is far from lovely or fantastic. It is cruel and debilitating.

There have been hundreds of occasions when I have been physically in a room, nodding along, holding reasonable conversations, whilst in my head being at a glitzy party, or putting my pretend children to bed. I've had hours where I've stood in the kitchen, talking to myself, appearing like a mad person or googling names for the imaginary baby I'm expecting. Occasionally my 'real' children have asked me mummy why are you walking along talking to yourself. It is hard to tell them - 'be quiet a second I'm just about to wrap some movie scenes in my head.'

There have been times when I've been at the end of my tether with it, sobbing my heart out in a heap on the floor, wondering how on earth I can carry on lying awake until 3am every night in another world. It is completely and utterly exhausting living one life, with children and a job, let alone two. Once for a few days, determined never to think about my other world again, I forced myself into reality with every ounce of strength I had. It was such an incredible few days of clarity. I felt like the whole world opened up - like a flower turning its face towards the sun in the first blooms of spring. But like a typical addict that flower soon withered and died.

I often think about how successful my life has been in spite of being a Maladaptive Daydreamer and how much more successful and fulfilling my life could have been if I had spent the last 25 years giving this world my full attention. But what do I tell the doctor? That I have a vivid imagination? My husband is the only loved-one I have ever told about the reality of my situation and that took many years, driving along in the car, when I was in utter despair and exhaustion one day, from living two lives at once. Once I did share Becci with an NLP therapist who told me to step into my other world, talk to her and say goodbye, but it was too painful to do it. Letting go would be like ripping out a vital organ.

Story continued on page 6..

NOTE TO OUR READERS:

If you are feeling really alone and just need people to talk to, you can find some MD communities on the web.

Check out our website to find more resources/community groups!

How it is today

A few months ago now, whilst googling 'help I have an imaginary world in my head' in a particularly bad moment, I came across the term Maladaptive Daydreaming Disorder.

MD isn't an official term recognised in psychology books yet, but thanks to the work of a few determined researchers and advocates, I hope that it soon will be. Judging by the experiences on Maladaptive Daydreaming forums of hundreds of people around the world, the condition is a very real thing, blighting the lives of similar creative, intelligent people, many with some kind of anxiety disorder, seeking a form of escape. Since exploring MD I have read the stories of so many people desperate to be part of the real world, but unable to leave behind something seemingly better, more controllable and very much an integral part of them.

I won't pretend that this is a story of redemption or that I have sage advice for anyone in the same boat, because in reality I'm not much better most of the time, though I do feel slightly more able to detach myself from my other world at times since I discovered that I'm not the only Maladaptive Daydreamer out there. One tactic I've come up with is to think of passcode, as if I am unlocking something in my head, which switches me back to real life. Other days though it is just as hard to escape from as ever - particularly if I feel low or wake up with lingering anxiety.

It is my hope that MD will soon be a mainstream term which is taken seriously within psychology because it deserves to be. In the meantime, knowing that there are so many others in the same situation has definitely helped me put a name to what I have, understand it better and realise that I am not alone. If you are suffering in the same way, please know that you are not alone either.

Check Out Some MD Youtubers



**Maladaptive Daydreamer
with Jayne Rachael**



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