

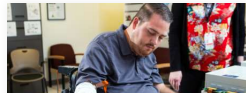
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A Paralyzed Man Has Had His Sense Of Touch Restored



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People Are Weirded Out To Discover That Some People Don't Have An Internal Monologue

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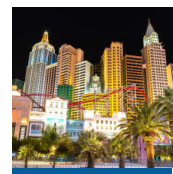
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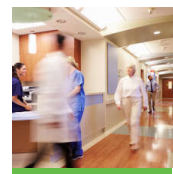


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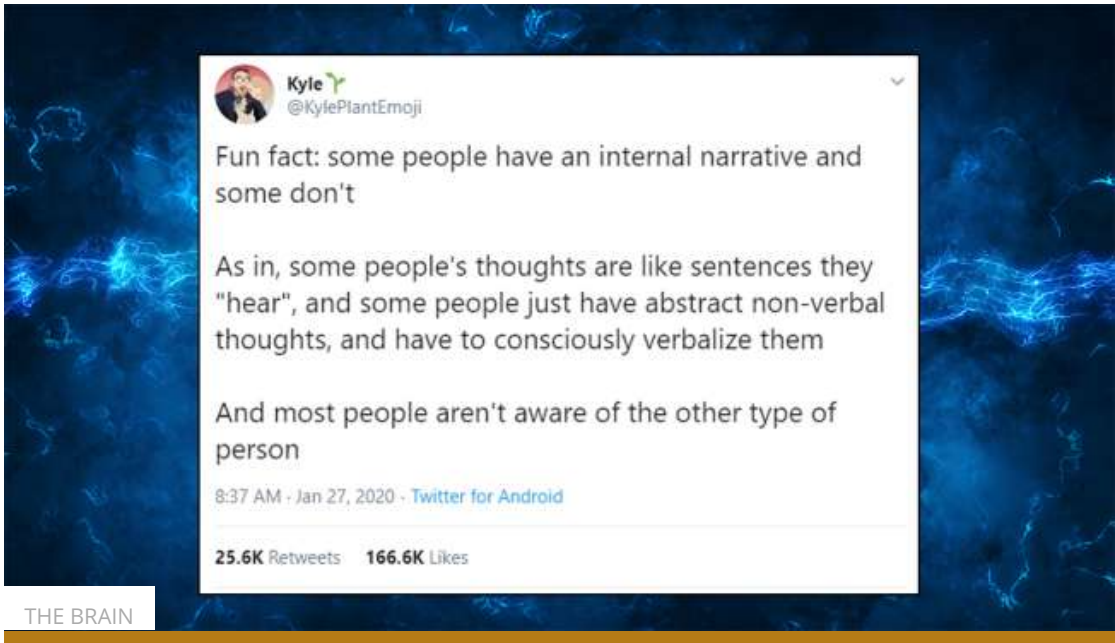
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ANDRUS CIPRIAN/SHUTTERSTOCK


I don't know about you, but I'd always just assumed that even though people think different (and mostly wrong – do better, everybody) thoughts from myself, everyone sort of thinks in roughly the same way that I do.

Well, it turns out that is not the case at all, and I'm far from alone in my mistake. A tweet went viral last week, and it's sparked a lot of conversation about whether or not people have internal monologues.



By James Felton

03 FEB 2020, 14:52



Kyle
@KylePlantEmoji

Fun fact: some people have an internal narrative and some don't

As in, some people's thoughts are like sentences they "hear", and some people just have abstract non-verbal thoughts, and have to consciously verbalize them

And most people aren't aware of the other type of person

168K 4:37 AM - Jan 27, 2020

[29.4K people are talking about this](#)

For me, I'd always assumed that everybody has an internal monologue, and that monologue is voiced by Patrick Stewart. It's odd to learn that a lot of people don't have this at all, or it's portrayed by someone other than Captain Picard.



Museums Share Their Most Disturbing Treasures In Viral Twitter Challenge And It's All Kinds Of Wrong



Did Air Conditioning Spread Covid-19 To Nine People In A Restaurant? New Case Report Suggests So



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Most people do genuinely seem surprised to learn about people thinking in the opposite way to them.



Jeanna Louise Skinner
@JeannaLStars

I'm sitting here trying to imagine what hearing your own voice in your head constantly narrating your every waking moment feels like and I'm so fucking glad my mind doesn't do this.

twitter.com/KylePlantEmoji...

Kyle 🌱 @KylePlantEmoji

Fun fact: some people have an internal narrative and some don't

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And most people aren't aware of the other type of person

40 10:49 AM - Feb 2, 2020

[27 people are talking about this](#)



Kathryn Foxfield 🦄
@iloveweirdbooks

So not everyone has a voice inside their head that never, ever shuts up? My internal narrative and I find this almost impossible to comprehend. twitter.com/KylePlantEmoji...

Kyle 🌱 @KylePlantEmoji

Fun fact: some people have an internal narrative and some don't

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And most people aren't aware of the other type of person

24 7:16 AM - Jan 28, 2020

[18 people are talking about this](#)



Benjamin Wash Your Fkn Hands & Stay TF Indoors I
@mrbenjaminlaw



This thread is fascinating and blowing my mind.

I can think in fully formed sentences if I need to, but the idea many of you have constant, never-ending, Virginia Woolf-esque trains of thought—properly expressed in language—is incredible. twitter.com/KylePlantEmoji...

Kyle 🌱 @KylePlantEmoji

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And most people aren't aware of the other type of person

846 12:27 AM - Jan 31, 2020

[238 people are talking about this](#)



Riley J. Dennis

@RileyJayDennis

wait is this real? how do u think if not in sentences in ur head???

twitter.com/KylePlantEmoji...

Kyle 🌱 @KylePlantEmoji

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216 10:02 AM - Jan 27, 2020

[51 people are talking about this](#)



WitchyTwitchy on OnlyFans

@witchytwitchytv

This is so wild to me I can't imagine thinking in actual sentences and hearing an internal monologue. People really think in sentences???? twitter.com/KylePlantEmoji...

Kyle 🌱 @KylePlantEmoji



Fun fact: some people have an internal narrative and some don't

As in, some people's thoughts are like sentences they "hear", and some people just have abstract non-verbal thoughts, and have to consciously verbalize them

And most people aren't aware of the other type of person

563 7:10 PM - Jan 27, 2020

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Benjamin Wash Your Fkn Hands & Stay TF I... · Jan 31, 2020

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twitter.com/KylePlantEmoji...

Kyle 🌱 @KylePlantEmoji

Fun fact: some people have an internal narrative and some don't

As in, some people's thoughts are like sentences they "hear", and some people just have abstract non-verbal thoughts, and have to consciously verbalize them

And most people aren't aware of the other type of person



Van Badham
@vanbadham

I have polyphonic internal narration. Everything I do in a day is processed through *several* different internal voices (all me) talking to one another in a conversation. If disgraces, sometimes I accidentally speak aloud the ongoing dialogue.

I THOUGHT EVERYONE WAS LIKE THIS.

227 6:31 AM - Jan 31, 2020

[39 people are talking about this](#)

Ask people around you and you'll likely find someone who doesn't think the way you do.

A colleague ([Tom Hale](#)) told me he doesn't hear an internal monologue, and responded with annoyance when I suggested that his lack of internal



monologue made him like a non-playable character in a video game, or a Buddhist monk that's achieved enlightenment.



Kyle 🌱 @KylePlantEmoji · Jan 27, 2020

Fun fact: some people have an internal narrative and some don't

As in, some people's thoughts are like sentences they "hear", and some people just have abstract non-verbal thoughts, and have to consciously verbalize them

And most people aren't aware of the other type of person



zainab
@howd9rk

Wait so some people don't have to suffer through the voice in their head going on a constant monologue?? Is that what it means to achieve inner peace??

18.4K 5:07 AM - Jan 27, 2020

[1,135 people are talking about this](#)

"Do you walk around saying in your head 'OK, up the stairs, then open the door, then I shall open the toilet seat'," he asked me, in a confrontational manner. "I just think in abstract terms, I guess? If I want a coffee, I won't say in my head (like a maniac) 'I am a bit tired and thirsty, I shall make myself a coffee'. I just think about it abstractly, maybe imagine walking over to the kettle, etc."

Something experienced by a lot of people online.



everyone leave me alone 🇵🇸 @shelbzazaaz · Jan 27, 2020

Replying to @KylePlantEmoji

my thoughts are def the abstract ones. if they contain words, it's more or less just fragments & not complete sentences until they're coming out. i think it's why i stumble over my words so often, stutter, always 5 levels ahead of whatever I'm actually saying, rambling, etc



Laurie Feinswog
@ljfxiki

Same. For me it's easier to write than speak. And i often don't really know what I'm thinking until i write it.

1,854 5:28 AM - Jan 27, 2020

[117 people are talking about this](#)



For me, in reality, it's a bit of a mix. For mundane tasks, I don't think [Patrick Stewart voice] "I am hungry now, some porridge I shall consume!". This is all done in abstract, maybe an image of porridge accompanied by a feeling of hunger. But more complex stuff, like thoughts about what I want to do over the next year or so, will be done through an inner monologue, sometimes with a cockney accent just to keep things fresh.

For the large part, I will have full conversations inside my head, sometimes like an argument where I'll dismiss something my inner monologue has said a second ago. It's basically like what happens on British sitcom *Peep Show*.

A (non-scientific) poll beneath the viral post on inner monologues showed that the majority of people experience their thoughts as words (currently around 58 percent), with 14 percent experiencing thoughts as concepts, and 19 percent experiencing both.



Alex Engelberg @aengelbro · Jan 27, 2020

Replying to @KylePlantEmoji

Huh, I'd love to see a poll on how many people are what



Idon'tknowwhatl'mdoing

@LJDEM

Let's try:

59% Thoughts as words

14% Thoughts as concepts

19% Both

8% No idea what these mean

20,300 votes • Final results

196 10:53 AM - Jan 27, 2020

118 people are talking about this

In more scientific studies, it seems people experience more of a mix than the self-selected responders to a viral post that implied it was either/or.

A [small study in 2011](#) tried to get a better picture of how people think. They gave beepers (Patrick Stewart impersonating an observational comedian voice: Remember beepers? What's the deal with beepers?) to a random sample of students. When the beeper went off, they had to note down what was going on inside their heads moments before it went off. This went on for several weeks, to get them used to it and then to get an accurate picture of what was happening inside their minds.



"Subjects experienced themselves as inwardly talking to themselves in 26 percent of all samples," the team wrote in [Psychology Today](#). "But there were large individual differences: some subjects never experienced inner speech; other subjects experienced inner speech in as many as 75 percent of their samples. The median percentage across subjects was 20 percent."

"Some people talk to themselves a lot, some never, some occasionally."

In case you're wondering, [deaf people have reported](#) having an internal monologue too.

"I have a 'voice' in my head, but it is not sound-based," one person who was born deaf wrote. "I am a visual being, so in my head, I either see ASL signs, or pictures, or sometimes printed words."

There are also people out there who can't picture things in their heads, known as [aphantasia](#).

also have antaphantasia, i thought it was a metaphor for the longest time as well. wasn't until i read a book when i was younger where they were explaining "mental images" when i was like oh this is REAL?

— charlie (is inactive 🙋🏻🙄) (@charleful) [January 27, 2020](#)

If you want to know what that's like, check out [this essay by somebody who can't form pictures in their mind](#).

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sillydilly 1 Apr

lol these are all so cool

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HeckingFrick 23 Nov

lol we need a show where a group of flat-earthers try to fir

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OliveChilli · 3 Feb



The only problem I have with identifying my inner thought processes is that every time I pay attention to what I am thinking, I immediately change the way it's working--like trying to pin down some gel. It's like paying attention to your breathing: as soon as you are conscious of it you can't breathe naturally. I'm not even sure if I am thinking these words I am typing.

Reply · Share · 42 Likes ·

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JGAlegria · 1d ➔ OliveChilli



Buddhists pay attention to their breathing all the time - that's what one does in mindfulness meditation - you can either modulate your breathing and make it slower and deeper or let go and observe it - must be able to do that with your mind also then right? just notice it without changing it - then change it , then don't change it.... ? no?

Reply · Share ·



RedCoffee · 4 Feb ➔ OliveChilli



Great! Now I'm having problems breathing. Thanks!

Reply · Share · 19 Likes ·


Akima Corvin · 3 Feb · Edited



I wonder if I am alone in this. My thinking is a combination of verbal dialogue (my own voice), colors, shapes, colors and shapes, memories, pictures, and a movie/picture show kinda thing. When I'm being analytical, and problem solving its mostly verbal dialogue, memories of things I have learned, and pictures of texts and manuals that I have read. When I'm being creative its colors, shapes, colors and shapes, memories and pictures. No verbal dialogue when I'm creative. When I'm



writing I only think in a movie/picture show kinda thing. I always thought this is how everyone thinks.

Reply · Share · 25 Likes ·  

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JGAlegria · 1d · Edited ➔ Akima Corvin



sounds intense! When I'm being creative it just comes out of nowhere - straight onto the paper or board or whatever I'm creating with. I see pictures from my memories but they aren't very colourful at all. Can't remember seeing any text ever! When I'm trying to think about something I usually write (type) as that way I can check - I tend to read what I write as a way to get to know my own thoughts on something. Or have a discussion about it with someone.

Reply · Share ·  

Jen Clements · 12 Feb ➔ Akima Corvin



I think like this and I have also had the realization this isn't typical! Have you looked into synesthesia? I have it with sounds to colors and sounds to shapes. I have always assumed this way of thinking was an expression of that?

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OliveCherries · 7 Feb



Ok, so on top of the dialogue, who has nearly all the time music playing in their heads?
Sometimes, the same song or musical phrase will playback over and over, for days even, until I listen to it, sing or whistle it out of my system.
Side note, I'm not a musician or have any relevant musical training, and the songs are almost always irrelevant to what's going on or what I'm doing.
Example, the other day I was giving a 3 hour workshop, and WHILE I WAS TALKING, I was still hearing/singing a melody on a loop in my head, trying to figure out the notes just right...
Also, I'm constantly asking people around me what song is playing in their heads at any given moment, for fun and maybe trying to distract my mind and think of another song... Lots of people look at me like I'm crazy when I ask them that.

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Chillerz · 5 Mar → OliveCherries



I get music also. Sometimes it is so realistic I'll look around to see where it is coming from, only to realise that it's in my head.

Reply · Share ·



GoldPizza · 27 Feb → OliveCherries



I also hear music all of the time. Most of the time it is in the background, but sometimes it is louder than I would like. It isn't always a song I know, sometimes it is just like the end of a classic piano piece, where they keep hitting the same cord to end the song. Only it doesn't end.

Reply · Share · 2 Likes ·



RedPuzzle · 3 Feb



I mostly monologue in my head. Sometimes the voice is Ozzy Man Reviews guy and it's awesome when that happens! I can and often do visualize most thoughts but also talk about what I see in my head.

Reply · Share · 8 Likes ·



CyanHelmet · 4 Feb



Is this normal: I think things before I officially think about them. And the initial thought is incredibly fast. For example if i want to think about the following: Green lunch yellow disk on the top i'll find ball. my internal internal dialogue will think that sentence out first then my internal dialogue will repeat it.

Reply · Share · 5 Likes ·

Icer Rose · 9 Feb · Edited



The only thing that weirded me out, is that someone else has Patrick Stewart doing their internal monologue. Engage!

Reply · Share · 4 Likes ·

CyanBike · 4 Feb





The iratatin part is i kant get gammuri to workso mine coms complet with speling and punkshuwayshun mistaks/

Reply · Share · 3 Likes ·



GreenGoggles · 7 Feb → CyanBike



Sounds like dyslexia, they may echo off each other though, never thought about that.

Reply · Share ·



PurpleLocomotive · 3 Feb



I am a highly cited research professor (within the top 0.1% of my field) who is quite good at coming up with new ways about thinking about things. I find myself having these constant internal debates and dialogues with myself, usually figuring things out and trying to argue my case. When I am writing, I can have particularly vigorous internal debates, and the greatest ideas usually come in the mornings (often while in shower). But this is not limited to abstract theorising only: these debates can be about anything, but usually the purpose is to come up with a logical solution to any given issue (such as figuring out which platform my usual train is likely to leave from in any given evening). I do not have a dialogue on whether to have a cup of coffee, for example, although I might have a debate about whether I should have that cup now or later.

Reply · Share · 9 Likes ·

Show 1 previous replies ▾



BlueRadio · 4 Feb · Edited → PurpleLocomotive





And then there is the theory entertained by significantly more than the top .01% of cognitive scientists (which is good, otherwise I would not be in that bracket) that you actually don't have good introspective access to your thought processing, whether startled by a beeper alarm or just freely reflecting.

So in a sense this debate is off from the get-go, as the question actually (mildly) illuminated by the findings discussed in the article is "of the cognitive processes in your mind, which ones are likely to feature in conscious reflection, and which perceptual format do they have when reflected on". The punch line being that e.g. obviously all people are capable of recalling visual information (how else would you recognize a drawing



you have seen before?), but not everyone is capable of bringing the contents of visual processing to conscious attention (thus becoming mental imagery) without external stimulation.

Type of thought we are engaged in definitely plays a role, so BlueBucket is right in that regard. Not sure about the "aberrant" comment, though, as not everyone might even be capable of rigidly tracking their current mode of thought, let alone that everyone constantly experiences their own cognitive processing...



Reply · Share · 2 Likes ·  



GoldAirBalloon · 3 Feb → PurpleLocomotive



As a cognitive psychologist in the top .01%, I can confidently assure you that there is very little variation in this among the general population. The mode of thought and our subjective experience of "consciousness" depends on the type of thinking in which we are currently engaged. Differences in intelligence are simply variation in the efficiency of these patterns, not their basic structure. Significant deviation from this is almost always the result of localized brain injury or abnormal development, anatomy, and/or morphology. To put it simply, anyone who does not employ constantly and fluidly changing modes of thought would be atypical enough that they would be easily recognizable as aberrant by even a casual observer.

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BluePuzzle · 7 Apr



So... basically lots of people have voices in their heads? To be honest, I'd always heard that was a bad sign (you know, to hear voices). I don't have anything like that, unless specifically recalling what somebody said to me, and I hear internally when I read (the first being because there's an actual memory of sound, the second because each letter represents a sound). Never at any other time, though, and there's no pictures, either. There's just... nothing.



Guess I'm just dead inside.

Lol, no. I suppose on consideration there's... *concept*... Formless idea, is the only way I can describe it. There's a



knowing you believe or have decided something, but no voice or images to go along with that. It's entirely abstract. Emotion and concept.

From most of what people are saying on this topic, I'm kinda worried that's abnormal. Am I broken, or something?

Reply · Share · 2 Likes ·  



JGAlegria · 1d ➔ BluePuzzle



Green Butterfly - you are quite similar to me - I talk in my head when I read and I can hear what someone said to me if I remember it. Generally I sense my thoughts as rather nebulous unless I choose to talk in my mind as though I was writing or reading it out. Otherwise I have a lot of quiet space, I mean a lot. The background is quiet when I read for example, or if I watch a movie or if I meditate - it's silent. Sometimes vague images from a memory float by or music is playing in the background but I can stop it voluntarily. If I want to I can visualise but when I draw it comes from that nebulous raw data - I don't picture in my mind what I will draw. I don't think what I write before I write it - it just comes out of the darkness.



Reply · Share ·  



GoldPuzzle · 29 Feb · Edited



I'm so dumbfounded right now... The 'voices' in my head are constant sentences/monologue. As I am getting older, 43, they are getting more chaotic and even overlap each other, like interrupting each other. I've been feeling like I must be the epitome of a 'crazy' person, but then I remind myself that all people have these conversations going in their mind and I'm perfectly normal, just breathe. Now, to hear that some people are not in this constant state of dialogue with themselves is very troubling. Does anyone else have 1st, 2nd, & 3rd party style dialogue running every second of the day??? Or, should I really considered be crazy?

Reply · Share · 2 Likes ·  





JGAlegria · 1d ➔ GoldPuzzle



Hi Gold Puzzle - no it doesn't mean you are crazy - yes lots of people have this experience. If it is increasing then it seems like you would benefit from paying more attention rather than less ie there is something beneath



all that dialogue that is emotional and maybe even unprocessed grief. If you are interested look up Dr Richard Schwartz and IFS - it's non pathologising and you can do your own 'self-therapy'. Best of luck!

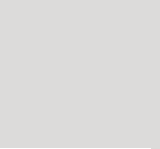
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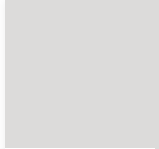
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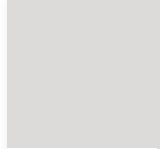
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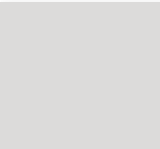
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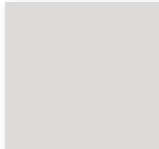
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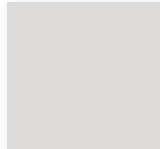
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