

‘Mind blindness’ makes it hard to remember the past and picture the future

[R]ecent studies have found that 2% to 5% of people will see nothing at all [when they try to imagine something]; they have [aphantasia](#), or “mind-blindness”.

Australian research, [published](#) in the journal Scientific Reports, has discovered aphantasia could have broader ramifications for important thought processes, making it hard to remember the past, picture the future and even dream.

“The human mind is like an expert simulation device, allowing us to mentally travel through time,” [says author Alexei Dawes]

...

People with aphantasia lack this rich sensory detail, so they can recall things that happened, but don’t see it in their mind’s eye.

“They don’t see the pattern of the icing on the birthday cake, or the wedding crowd cheering as the fiancés share their first kiss, or the bright red of the sun as it sets over the horizon,” says Dawes. “Instead, it’s like a blank slate in there – just black.”

This might also be true for other cognitive processes. Without visual imagery, how do you visualise numbers to solve a maths problem, or dream without seeing the video-like images play out or plan for a future that you can’t see?

“In the case of aphantasia, we’re really talking about widespread differences in any mental process that requires us to simulate an event or scene using sensory detail – the mental journeys we take inside our minds every day.”

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