

Aphantasia

What Is Aphantasia?

Aphantasia is the inability to visualize mental images, that is, not being able to picture something in one's mind. Many people with Aphantasia are also unable to recall sounds, smells, or sensations of touch. Some also report prosopagnosia, the inability to recognize faces. (Wiki)

Aphantasia was first named in 2015 by Prof Adam Zeman, a cognitive and behavioural neurologist at the University of Exeter. Zeman first became aware of the phenomenon when he was referred to a patient who had 'lost' his visual imagery after a heart operation.

Aphantasia was first described by Sir Francis Galton in 1880 but remained largely neglected until, Dr. Adam Zeman began his work in the early 2000s and coined the name from the Greek word "phantasia," which means "imagination.

There is further research into this contention as it is largely unstudied at this time and is poorly understood. There have been long debates by researchers into the mind's ability to visualize and how it relates to the brain's memory functionality. Currently researchers have no indications that the impact of Aphantasia is negatively affecting memory. As many people are born with Aphantasia they do not realise that their experience of thinking about an item or person is different to how others experience. This means that there are people around the world that are living with Aphantasia without knowing.

"When asked to visualise a sunset, for example, people with aphantasia are unable to conjure any kind of image to mind and will often have assumed that terms like the 'mind's eye' are purely metaphorical. At the other end of the spectrum, people with hyperphantasia describe imagery so vivid that they can find it difficult to be sure whether an image was

Living with Aphantasia

Studies have suggested that Aphantasia does not necessarily affect the success in a person's life. There are many successful engineers, artists and even doctoral students that are living with this daily. There is no treatment required for this condition but that does not mean it does not have effects on other parts of a person's life. Without the ability to visualize it could prove difficult with general learning abilities.

perceived or imagined."

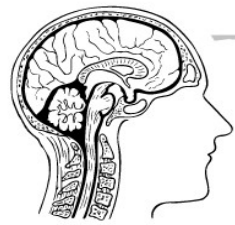
Key Facts

- Some people are born with Aphantasia, whereas others can acquire it through traumatic incidents such as brain injury or periods of psychosis
- Spatial imagery (e.g., the ability to recognise the distance between two places or mentally rotate and object) are unaffected by Aphantasia
- There is some evidence to suggest autistic people are far more likely to have Aphantasia

"Aphantasia is the inability to visualize mental imagery. Otherwise known as blind imagination."

"If you are like the estimated 1—3% of the population with Aphantasia, you may be unable to visualize any type of image in your head."





Aphantasia

- Many Aphants also report having Severely Deficient Autobiographical Memory (SDAM), and most Aphants report reduced ability to remember the past or project into the future
- Aphants appear more likely to have prosopagnosia (face blindness), a condition characterised by a reduced ability to recognise faces
- Some people with Aphantasia dream visually, whereas some others report more having a sense of what is happening in the dream
- Many do not discover that their experience is any different from that of others until their late teens or early 20s. It might be while reminiscing about the past and realizing they are having a different experience with memory than their friends or family. It is not that they do not notice that they do not visualize. They just do not know that other people do.

Signs

- Unable to conjure a clear image of a family member,
- Difficulty pictures their characteristic movements and gestures?
- Unable to remember or visualize
- No image at all, only “know” they are thinking of the object

If you feel like you might have aphantasia there is a VVIQ test you can do [here](#) on the Aphantasia website.

There are also certain memory strategies you can do if you suspect you may have some level of Aphantasia.

Reference Guide

[NYTIMES](#)
[Aphantasia.com](#)
[Very Well Minded](#)
[Science Focus](#)

Scientific Research and Papers

[A cognitive profile of multi-sensory imagery, memory and dreaming in aphantasia](#)
[\(A\)Aphantasia and severely deficient autobiographical memory: Scientific and personal perspectives](#)
[The blind mind: No sensory visual imagery in aphantasia](#)
[Aphantasia, imagination and dreaming](#)
[Reflections on aphantasia](#)
[Refusing to imagine? On the possibility of psychogenic aphantasia. A commentary on Zeman et al. \(2015\)](#)