

Nothing to Report

I read an article today entitled “Not Everyone has an inner Voice Streaming Through Their Head” *

I become conscious of the tickertape commentary constantly running in the back of my mind, like the teleprinter that used to flicker at the bottom of the TV screen waiting to print out the football results every Saturday teatime. I am astonished that some people do not experience this. Surely sounds and smells stir unbidden memories. Do they bury self-doubt and self-reflection? Are their to-do lists stuck firmly to the page?

The smell of wisteria around my porch takes me straight back to Cyprus where I lived as a child. I drive to the supermarket. My brain remarks on how green the trees are; the pothole that is even deeper after the recent rain (must get my tyres checked); and the little boy furiously peddling his tricycle along the pavement. I think of my granddaughter who will soon be doing the same, and of her dad when he was a teenager and the awkward conversation we had in this very car about safe sex. I remind myself to add bacon to the shopping list. I walk up and down the supermarket aisles trying to remember what was on the shopping list left on the mantelpiece at home. I see Marigold gloves and remember a friend who died young of breast cancer. The song playing over the Tannoy brings awkward memories of school discos. I am irritated by the lack of manned tills and amused when the ‘visibly over 25’ button is pressed by the assistant without a moment’s hesitation. In the car on the way home, I silently rehearse a difficult conversation I need to have with a member of my team on Monday, about performance targets and body odour.

Even when I am asleep my brain whirrs and I dream a lot, processing the events of the day, sifting through past events and future plans, mixing it all with a dose of the surreal. I always remember them the next day. If I lost my inner voice, would my sleep be dreamless? Or would I cease to exist? Could I silently absorb the world by osmosis through my pores, accepting it without judgement, without the need to describe it and rationalise it, my head just an echo chamber of silence? It might be great to have nothing to report.

397 words

* (Simon Makin, Scientific American, 5 July 2024)

