The mind wanders to dark places: Mind-wandering predicts subsequent rumination
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Background
- Rumination has been well-established as a cognitive risk factor for major depressive disorder (MDD).
- Recent work has proposed that mind-wandering may facilitate rumination and thus risk for MDD.
- However, the temporal relationship between these processes remains unclear.
- We investigated the temporal relationship between mind-wandering and rumination.

Methods
PARTICIPANTS
- 82 young adults with remitted MDD or no mental disorder
PROCEDURE
- Ecological momentary assessment of mind-wandering and rumination 3x/day for 1 week
DATA ANALYSIS
- Investigated whether mind-wandering predicted subsequent increases in rumination or vice versa
- Examined moderators of this relationship
  - Depression history
  - Intensity of negative affect
  - Momentary impulsivity (e.g., “I made a ‘spur of the moment’ decision”)

Results
- Compared to healthy volunteers, individuals with remitted MDD showed no difference in the relationship between mind-wandering and rumination, in either direction (ps > .16).
- Compared to healthy volunteers, individuals with remitted MDD showed similar mean levels of brooding, but higher mean levels of mind-wandering (p<.05).

Conclusion
- Spontaneous mind-wandering may transition into rumination, particularly when individuals are experiencing more negative affect or behaving more impulsively than usual.
- When negative affective states are present, the mind may be more likely to dwell on salient negative content.

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