

10-MINUTE FOCUS

25 HABITS FOR MASTERING YOUR CONCENTRATION
AND ELIMINATING DISTRACTIONS



DANIEL WALTER

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10-MINUTE FOCUS: 25 Habits for Mastering Your Concentration and
Eliminating Distractions
by Daniel Walter

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INTRODUCTION

10 minutes. That's how long it takes to do most of the activities in this book. Sometimes even less.

By taking just 10 minutes at the beginning of your day to plan, eliminate distractions, and get your environment ready, you will notice improved focus for the rest of the day. In most cases, forcing yourself to just start a project and work on it for 10 minutes is enough to bring yourself to a state of deep work.

Ah, if only it were that simple. Distractions abound in the modern workplace and sometimes even our best efforts to focus are interrupted by co-workers, email and our own perfectionistic thoughts. That's what this book is about: learning how to take control of your environment, eliminate distractions and get your thoughts working for you instead of against you.

And you're not alone. Focus can be a problem for everyone at times—there are days when you are able to accomplish everything on your to-do list and there are days you cannot seem to get anything done. Your energy levels also seem to fluctuate based on the time of day.

You experience highs when you can just zip through projects and get things done in no time, and then there are the times of day when you cannot get anything done at all because your energy is so low. Of course, this doesn't even take into consideration the fluctuations in focus that can occur as a result of your emotions, as well.

Focus is hard to capture, but if you learn how to use it the right way, you will become more efficient with the work that you get done. This guidebook will provide you with the tools that you need to get your work done without losing focus and falling prey to all the distractions that come up during the day.

This guidebook is divided into five chapters. The first chapter begins with an introduction that explains exactly what focus is, why it is hard to

maintain and a bit about how procrastination can play a big role in your lack of focus.

The second chapter looks at how the right work environment can make a huge difference in how much work you get done, and what you can do to take control of that environment. We finish the first chapter with a quiz that will tell you how much of a problem you have with focusing. With the results, you can self-evaluate exactly where you are and what you can do to improve.

When you feel directionless, it quickly gets overwhelming. And when you feel overwhelmed, you're susceptible to distractions and procrastination. That's why having a plan is the key to feeling in control and in charge. In chapter three, you will read about how you can plan your day to maximize effective work time and minimize distractions.

Taking definitive action in the moment is also essential to getting focused. And sometimes taking a small action, such as turning your phone off for a few hours, can have a big impact on your ability to focus. Chapter four tells you some actions that you can do that will result almost immediately in improved concentration.

Finally, in chapter five, we'll get into all the ways in which improving your health can improve your focus. Simply put, if you're in good physical health and you feel well rested and well fed, you will have more energy. And if you have more energy, you will be able to focus better and do better work.

Throughout this book, you will learn about 25 habits that you can cultivate to improve your focus. These tips are not difficult and are meant to be easily added into your daily routine seamlessly. And again, most of them only take 10 minutes or less to complete!

It doesn't matter whether you are scheduling only five things to do during the day, working tirelessly in bursts during your higher energy times, or even learning how to avoid your email and phone when you first get to the office; you are sure to find some tips to help you maintain your focus and get your work done.

If you are tired of running into issues with your focus, and if you want to be in charge of your own time, be sure to check out this guidebook to get started!

JOIN OUR PRODUCTIVITY GROUP

In order to maximize the value you receive from this book, I highly encourage you to join our tight-knit community on Facebook. Here you will be able to connect and share productivity strategies in order to continue your growth.

It would be great to connect with you there,

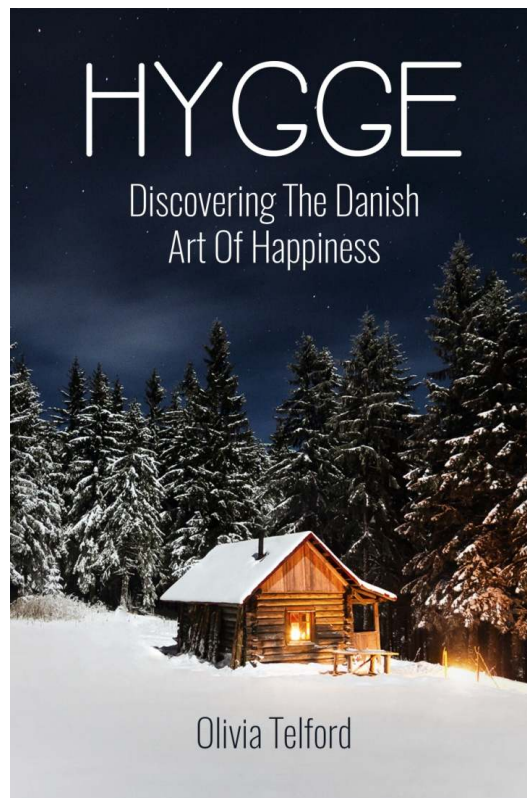
Daniel Walter

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YOUR FREE GIFT

As a way of saying thanks for downloading this book, I'm offering the book *Hygge: Discovering the Danish Art of Happiness* for FREE to my readers. It was written from a close friend of mine named Olivia Telford, who has kindly allowed me to share it with you.

With Hygge, you'll discover something that offers relaxation, happiness and contentment, all rolled into one. It is a way of being and living that has been adopted by countless numbers of people throughout Scandinavia and the wider world and reflects a 'coziness' that encompasses the positivity and enjoyment that one can get from simple everyday things.



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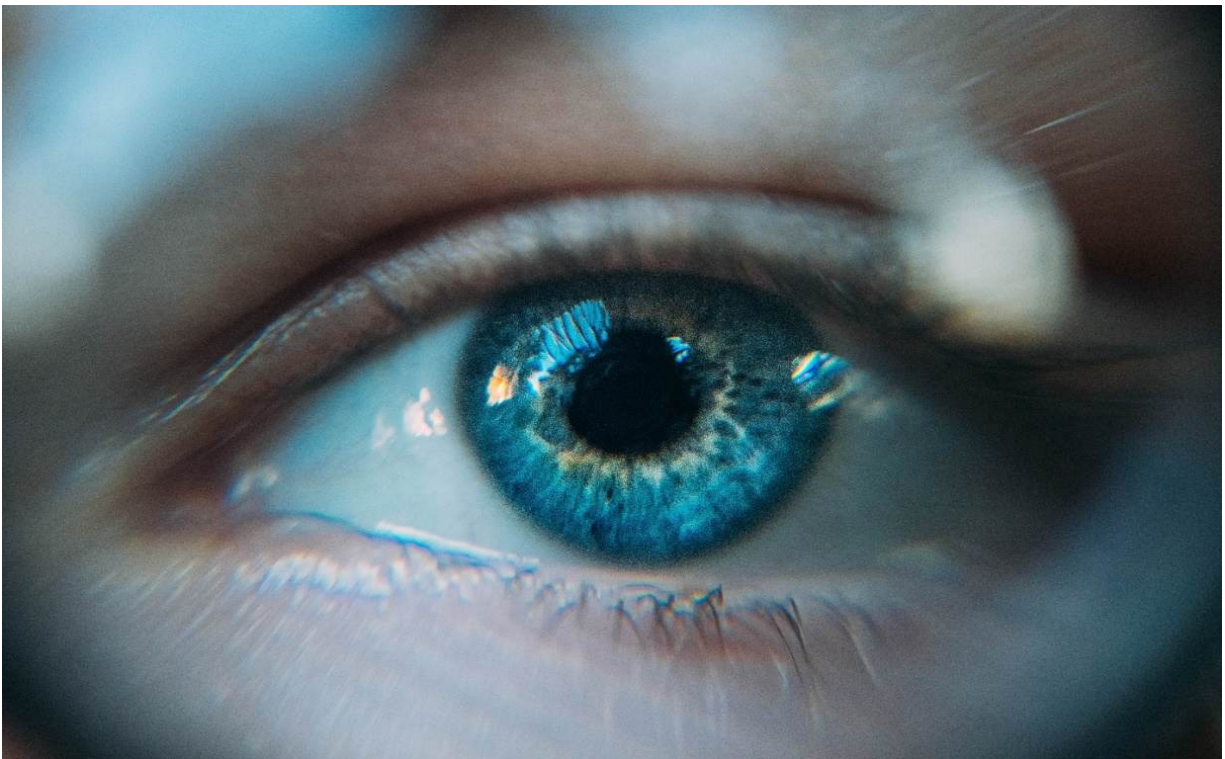
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CHAPTER 1: UNDERSTANDING FOCUS

UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS OF FOCUS

When you think about having focus, you may equate it with having tunnel vision—the belief that you can ignore everything, and just focus on the task that is right in front of you. However, attention management and focus are actually much more complicated than that. In reality, you are managing many different types of attention throughout the day, whether you realize it or not. These types dictate what you notice, do not notice, as well as what you ignore, or focus on. They can also have some different uses and impose different challenges. Taking a closer look at focus will help this make a little more sense.



Voluntary and involuntary attention

Two main types of attention are voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary attention is what you use when you want to consciously, or purposely, focus on something. For instance, if you are in a room while someone else is watching television, and you want to read a book, you may find it difficult to concentrate on what you are reading. You would have to voluntarily pay attention to the book and block out the other noises so that you can focus.

With voluntary attention, you are in control, and you get to decide what captures your attention and what does not. Remember that voluntary attention is like a muscle that needs to be used in order to remain relevant. Unfortunately, most people do not use this skill as often as they should. The good news is that you can strengthen your ability to voluntarily pay attention by using it more. Essentially, you can flex your ability to voluntarily focus, the same way that you can flex a muscle! You will be able to learn how to overcome any distractions and develop a better ability to concentrate on demand, but you are going to have to put in some work to make it happen. It's important to remember that so many goals, including learning how to focus, take time, effort, and energy.

On the other hand, involuntary attention is the exact opposite, meaning you do not have any control over this type. For example, if you hear a gunshot, it is going to grab your attention, no matter how much focus you have. If you are concentrating on something important at work, a blood-curdling scream can still break your concentration. This involuntary attention has a lot of value when your safety is at risk. In fact, it has evolutionary value. Imagine for a second, that your ancestors are hunting for food. They would have been vulnerable to attacks from wild animals and any other aggressive tribes nearby; but involuntary attention was a tool that kept them alert and safe. Essentially, involuntary attention kept them alive.

You are probably not going to be in many situations that threaten your life today. This is because in modern times, we no longer live a hunting-gathering lifestyle or have to kill prey to feed ourselves. However, this involuntary attention is still there and it works hard to draw our attention to any changes in the environment that the body thinks we need to pay attention to. Instead of wild animals, it is going to sound the alarm to things

that are relatively trivial. For example, when your phone vibrates or chirps, it immediately draws your attention so that you can check why the phone reacted that way. Alternatively, you may notice that there is a new email on the tab and you want to go see what it is about right away. It often can become second nature.

Involuntary attention does not have as much use in our lives today since most people are not under a constant threat. However, it can continue to exist in the background, trying to keep you alert. It ends up creating an endless stream of distractions that you will need to learn how to avoid and ignore if you want to get anything else done.

Broad vs. focused attention

There are a few other different types of attention as well. Broad attention allows you to evaluate your circumstances from a “bird’s eye view.” You are going to see the forest, rather than looking at the individual trees, as the famous saying goes. For example, if you are a general in a war and are working on a military strategy, you would use the broad attention idea to map out any types of strikes, envision the supply lines, and forecast how a large group of troops is going to move. The broad attention allows you to see the big picture, and plot accordingly. After you have been able to see this big picture, you would then be able to use the focused attention in order to address the details.

Focused attention, on the other hand, allows you to appraise what happens in a specific situation, and you can come up with the best approach, given your specific goals and the resources that you have around you. In the example above, a challenge that you may face is how to overtake some area in the war, given the strength and number of the adversaries. This is when you would use the focused attention to help resolve the challenge. The good news is that you get to be in complete control! Unlike what you find with involuntary attention, you get to decide how you should wield these tools, which means that you get to use this to your advantage.

Keep in mind that both the focused attention and the broad attention can be good, but they do pose some potential pitfalls. For example, if you only concentrate your efforts on the big picture or the broad attention, it is more likely that important details will fall through the cracks. You have to simultaneously keep both in mind. The same can be an issue going the other way as well. If you zero in on one specific situation, which is focused attention, and exclude the overall big picture, you are going to end up with what is known as “tunnel vision”. This is going to have the effect of impairing your overall awareness of the situation and can lead you to ignoring or being unaware of important factors.

This is just a brief overview of what can happen with attention, and why it is so important to you. There are some types of attention you have no control over, and it can be difficult to ignore them, and not let them take over your day. Some types of attention are going to be voluntary and you

will have control over them, which will be discussed in this guidebook. When you learn more about how to control your attention and avoid the distractions, you are going to see so many amazing results within your own work.

WHY DO I KEEP LOSING FOCUS?

You know what it is like to be sitting at your desk with a lot of work, but for some reason, you just cannot seem to concentrate. You are distracted. Every noise that goes on around you—from the traffic outside to a notification on your phone—has the power today to pull your attention away from your work. Moreover, when you do finish the work, you have a big feeling that the quality has suffered because you were not able to focus.



This is something with which most people are familiar. The work takes twice as long and quality suffers because you are just not able to control the distractions around you. This can lead to self-doubt. It can also be frustrating until you learn how to master your own attention.

In order to help you strengthen the focus that you do have, it is important to learn why you may be losing your focus in the first place. There are usually five factors that contribute to a lack of focus:

- Lack of interest

- Negative emotions
- Poor organization
- Low energy levels
- Lack of control

Let's break each one of these down and take a quick look at them to get a better understanding of why it is so easy to lose focus.

Lack of interest

It is much easier for you to concentrate on a task that interests you. In order to focus, you need to feel engaged in some manner with the task. You need to feel stimulated somehow. When you have an interest in the task, you are more likely to zero in on it, and thus ignore the distractions that go on around you. It is truly remarkable what you can do if you are passionate about your work. Like Confucius said thousands of years ago; “If you love what you do, you will never work a day in your life.”

Negative emotions

When you are in a negative emotional state, your ability to concentrate suffers. If you feel lonely, hostile, depressed, annoyed, or stressed, it can be next to impossible to focus on the important things, at least until you get the feeling under control. Your mind will be so preoccupied with these emotions that you will not have enough cognitive resources available to use to manage your attention.

Poor organization

When you have planned well and organized your day, you will have a better chance at concentrating and ignoring distractions. You will find that it is much easier to manage your attention when your day follows a consistent and familiar pattern. With good organization, you will be better able to keep chaos at bay, and it will do wonders for helping you stay focused, regardless of the task.

Low levels of energy

Another factor that can take away your focus is low energy, something that most people don't consider. You would be surprised at how much energy you need when you have to focus on things for a long time. Your body needs fuel—regular exercise, sufficient sleep, and good food—in order to keep it going.

Do not allow yourself to neglect one or more of these elements because your focus will suffer. Staying up late to get other priorities done, spending too much time on the couch rather than moving around, and not eating healthy foods all have a negative impact on your ability to focus. Your brain needs to have enough energy throughout the day so that it can function the right way and provide you with plenty of focus to get things done. No matter how energized or focused you are, a lack of sleep can truly affect an individual's mental state and potential.

Lack of control

The way that you choose to control your time can also be a big determining factor for how well you can concentrate. If you allow others to interrupt you, you will be unable to achieve the flow state that you need and want in order to work unencumbered by distractions. If people are always distracting you, it is hard to feel immersed in the task.

You must learn how to control your own time if you want a chance to develop razor-sharp focus. It is not always possible to avoid interruptions, nevertheless, there are steps that you can take to avoid unnecessary interruptions so you can get work done. It doesn't matter whether the issues revolve around family members, friends, or a significant other – a lack of control can be draining and be a tremendous obstacle to obtaining real focus.

Is the mind wandering a bad thing?

When you start to lose focus, your mind is going to wander, however, this isn't always a bad thing. The key is learning exactly how to make it work for you and use it to your advantage.

Mind wandering can be nice because it allows the brain some time to be creative. Mind wandering can help you figure out nontraditional solutions to problems that you are having trouble resolving. It can allow you to view things from a different perspective or analyze events or ideas from a more creative perspective. However, this does not mean that you should let your mind wander whenever it wants, because doing so will cut into your performance and productivity.

Make sure that you are focusing on the circumstances that need you to do so. The steps in this guidebook will teach you to do this. There are times—taking a walk or going to the gym—when there is nothing wrong with letting your brain wander a bit. You may even be pleasantly surprised by the things that your mind can come up with when you allow it to wander at the right times.

Now that you know the five biggest factors that can make you lose concentration during the day, it is time to move on and learn some of the common obstacles that you may face when you want to stay focused.

COMMON OBSTACLES THAT TAKE AWAY FOCUS

Many factors are going to impair your ability to stay focused, and you may be more likely to fall prey to one more than the others, but it is possible that each of these could become your enemy at some point. Some of the most common obstacles that you can face when you are trying to stay focused include:

- Mental fatigue
- Restlessness
- Stress
- Interruptions
- Lack of mental clarity
- Unresolved problems
- Poor planning
- Physical clutter
- Social media
- Your phone



Let's take a look at each obstacle and how it interrupts your ability to focus.

Mental fatigue

If your brain is tired, it is difficult to focus, making you more prone to distractions, which makes it difficult for you to zero in on the tasks that you want to get done. Mental exhaustion can come from several factors, but the biggest one is a lack of sleep. Even when you get to bed on time, if you spend the majority of the night tossing and turning, you are going to rob your brain of restful slumber and it will not be prepared for the hard work you give it the next day.

Restlessness

Restlessness is a general feeling of anxiety—something is going on that causes you to feel ill at ease. When you are restless, your brain is getting signals that something is wrong, and it is going to devote some of your cognitive resources to investigating and resolving the issues. However, it is often difficult to figure out the reason that you feel restless, which results in the brain spinning its wheels to resolve something that it can't pinpoint, making it difficult to focus on the important tasks. This is a classic case of spending mental energy in the wrong way.

Stress

A little bit of stress on occasion is actually good for you. It can keep you alert and help you hone your focus. However, if you suffer from chronic stress, you are always in a state of anxiety. Many causes can bring about this persistent stress. Some people feel stressed when they do not have control over their day, when they are close to a deadline that they are not ready for, or after a major life event. The more stress you have in your life, the more it is going to erode at your ability to focus.

Interruptions

Have you started working on something only to have a continuous string of interruptions? This includes emails, phone calls, and coworkers, all of which can be frustrating. Interruptions destroy any momentum you may have, and it takes a long time to get back on track after the distraction is gone. It's extremely easy to get derailed from a very positive and creative train of thought, by being interrupted by a remark, sound, or alert.

Lack of mental clarity

Sometimes your mind is full of trivial ideas and thoughts that may have nothing to do with what you are trying to get done. These thoughts and ideas are called mental clutter and make it impossible for you to concentrate. A mind that is cluttered is one that is unfocused.

Unresolved problems

Having an unresolved problem in your brain is like having a faucet that is leaky, keeping you awake at night. It is there in the background, and it is constantly calling attention to itself. It will not go away, which means that the brain is devoting resources to it, making it difficult to concentrate. It is important to take care of these unresolved problems so that you can get work done.

Poor planning

It is hard for you to stay focused on a project or a task when you do not have a clear and methodical plan to follow. Your brain will do its best to fill in the gaps of poor planning but will ultimately be too distracted to focus on the task at hand.

Think about the last time you went to the store without a list. Your attention was probably drawn to the numerous items on the shelf as you walked down the aisles. The visit that would only take a few minutes if you had come with a list, could take a lot longer, and you are likely to forget something. You might be distracted after seeing something on sale, leading you down a whole new distracting path. Without a plan, your brain is in an unfocused state. Create a plan and work from it, and you will see some great results.

Physical clutter

Do you keep your workspace messy or tidy? Physical clutter in your workspace will impair how well you focus. While some people say that they are still able to concentrate when they are working in an environment that is messy, there are studies that show this is not true.

The *Journal of Neuroscience* published a report in 2011 examining the effect of clutter on focus. This study concluded that working at a desk that is messy will hamper your ability to concentrate on tasks. Learning how to keep your workspace clean and clear can make a big difference.

Social media

Research shows that social media has a short-term effect on how well you are able to concentrate. One study that was done in the journal *Computers in Human Behavior* showed how many students were not able to go more than a few minutes without checking their social media sites. Social media can pose a big distraction, making it impossible to focus on the work you need to get done.

Your phone

Of course, your phone can also be a major distraction as well, even if you are not looking at it. It is going to constantly ring, vibrate, and chirp to let you know about updates on social media, voicemails, and incoming texts. Ignoring the phone is not possible and can prove a major distraction. It is best to keep your phone somewhere else so that you can pay attention when there is work to do. You might be surprised to see how much you can focus when your phone isn't within reach.

WHY IS FOCUS SO IMPORTANT?

You may be surprised to find out that the ability to focus is going to have a big impact on your life. Musicians, artists, and writers stand to produce much more work with more passion if they are focused. There are all sorts of actors and musicians that can admit that a project failed because of their lack of passion during that period in their life when they look back on their careers. Professors and teachers can create better exams, assignments, and lectures to help their students succeed if they have more focus. Parents can come up with better activities that are more creative, fun, and educational for their children if they have more focus.



It is actually our lack of focus, or our inability to focus, that can produce uninspiring results in all the things that we do, but this is not the way it has to be. You can take the steps needed to manage your attention, which will be covered extensively in this guidebook.

Why should you work so hard to increase your own focus? Consider these reasons:

Better productivity

Focus makes it easier for you to stay on task because you are better able to ignore distractions. When you are able to focus, you will be more likely to get into a flow state, which is when your attention is completely absorbed by the task in front of you. You will direct your attention in a more productive way and block out the distracting stimuli that would usually break your concentration and stop your momentum, which results in you getting more done in less time.

Improved relationships

When you are not good at managing your attention, you are more likely to spread yourself too thin, leaving yourself with too little attentional resources, energy, and time to offer to the ones who we value and love. When you get better at controlling your attention, you find that it is easier to be present when you spend your valuable time with loved ones and friends. You can form stronger connections with them, more intimacy and trust, which can make you feel more fulfilled.

Boost your critical thinking

Critical thinking is not something that you may have learned to do in college, and then never needed again. It can greatly benefit you at all points of life. For example, thinking critically while reading a book helps you feel more immersed in the story. If you are going to render a judgment, such as dealing with a fight between your kids, critical thinking will better equip you to do it with reason and fairness. Focus is important for you to think critically. If you are able to master the first one, you are going to improve the latter.

More grit

Experts often claim that intelligence is not a good measurement of success, however, one of the best ways to tell if you will be able to overcome challenges in your life is your grit or resilience. With it, you will likely experience more success in everything you do, but resilience is going to demand some sharp focus. It requires you to zero in on a challenge and devote more cognitive and physical resources to overcome it. You can learn how to direct your attention so that you can handle the challenges that you run into each day and face them with positivity and certainty.

Greater decisiveness

If you are decisive, you have the ability to make good decisions without overanalyzing everything. It lets you evaluate your circumstances, consider the different options, and then choose the one you want with confidence. This is important no matter what you do in your life. Luckily, it is a skill that you can develop. Moreover, attention mastery is an essential ingredient to this. It can allow you to make smarter and better decisions in your life.

If you struggle with indecisiveness, you may find yourself getting stuck when it is time to make a decision because you worry about all of the factors to consider. When you are indecisive, you could spend weeks thinking about a decision or second-guessing the decisions that you do make. With better focus, you pay attention to the details and make decisions with confidence.

Better retention of information that you get

Have you ever had trouble remembering new details such as a new concept, a person's name, or the best route to a destination? This is common because many factors affect your ability to hold onto information, including your levels of stress, the amount of sleep you get, and your levels of energy.

Your ability to focus has the greatest impact of all. Being able to focus allows you to cut through your brain fog, ignore distractions, and concentrate on the details that are important to you or that you want to commit to memory.

All of us have things that we need to remember. You need to be able to remember the information that your boss tells you, the names of the people you meet, and so much more. Human beings have to remember all sorts of data, whether it's e-mail addresses, inspirational quotes, or work deadlines. Moreover, with the help of the right amount of focus, you can make this happen.

Improved levels of confidence

Imagine what it would be like if you were able to master your own attention to the point that you were able to achieve all the other benefits that we discussed in this chapter. How do you think that would affect your self-confidence? It is likely that you are going to feel as if you can accomplish anything that you set your mind to.

Imagine that you get to enjoy more productivity, have the ability to think in a more critical manner, have stronger relationships, are better at making decisions, have improved memory, and can be more resilient, all at the same time. You are going to feel more self-assured when you are ready to start on a new task or a new project, no matter what it is!

WHAT DOES PROCRASTINATION HAVE TO DO WITH IT?

Procrastination is a big issue when it comes to keeping your focus. All of us have had times when we do not want to get work done. The work may be boring. You may think the work is too overwhelming, so why even try to work on it at all? Alternatively, perhaps there is some other reason that you decide to put off work. It might not even be a reason that you can readily identify.



If you receive a project and then decide to procrastinate getting it done, you can guess that your focus is going to be low. You have no interest in even starting, so why would you put your focus towards doing it? That certainly doesn't make any sense, does it? While a bit of procrastination is not the end of the world, it can end up being a big issue if you partake in it all the time.

Human beings have limited self-control. Self-control is like a muscle, in that it can become quickly exhausted, and in some people, this happens much faster than in others. It all depends on the individual's discipline and

habits. When self-control is close to being depleted, you are going to choose to do something that is more pleasurable—other tasks that lead to procrastination—rather than the work that needs to be done.

To make it simple, procrastination is a great avoidance strategy. You decide to look for distractions and avoid focus because you do not want to do the work. You may find it boring or too hard or something else, and so you refuse to give it the focus that it requires. Procrastinators are going to choose to work on something else rather than what needs to be done, simply because it is easier to choose the thing that brings pleasure rather than pain. This might be the easy choice, but not the productive choice.

Learning how to have more focus can help you to avoid procrastination. You can put it at bay, but it is going to be difficult. If you are a procrastinator, you will really find that some of the tips in this book are hard to follow because you are more inclined not to do the work at all, and your focus is probably limited.

Here are some things you can do to help avoid procrastination so that you can gain more focus quickly:

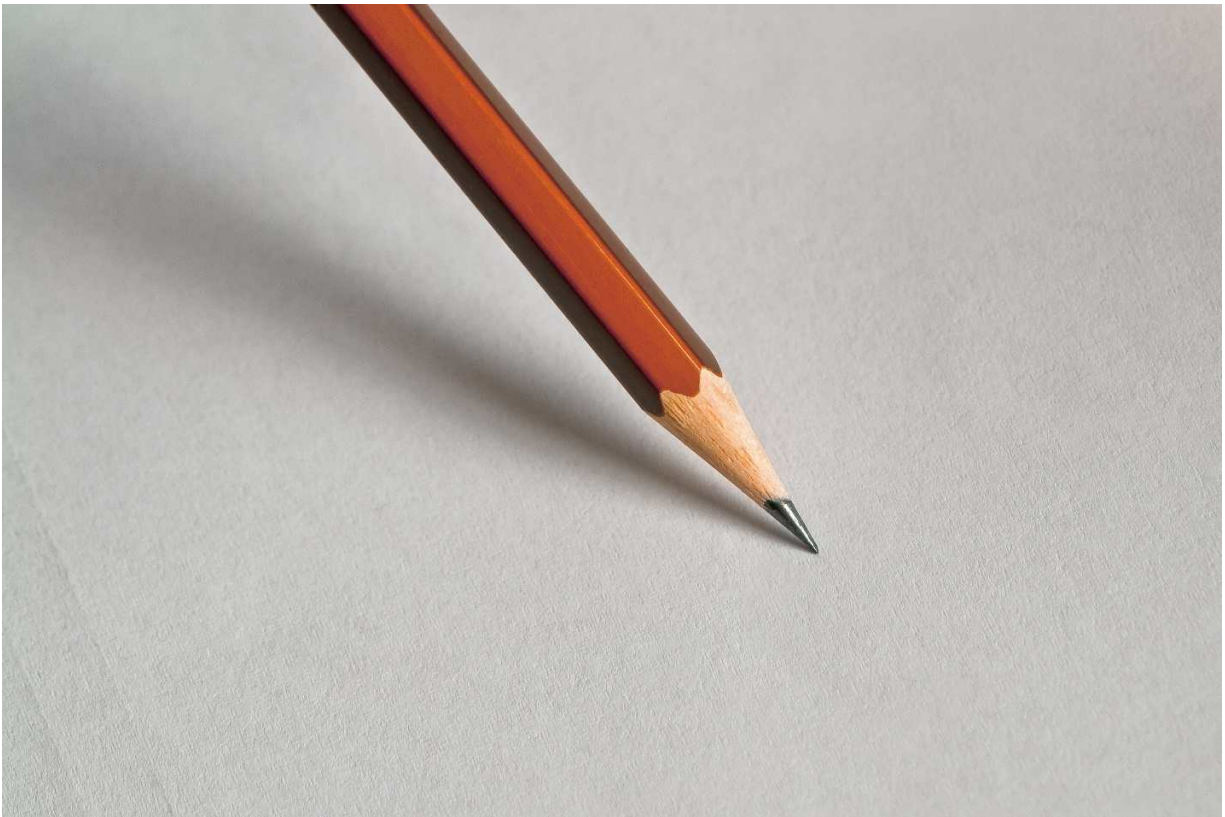
1. Identify your triggers: There are actually different types of procrastinators and knowing which one you are can help you to break the cycle.
 - a. Perfectionists will not get the work done because they know they cannot do it perfectly, or they are always waiting for the perfect approach or timing. Tasks are never done because, to them, things are never perfect enough.
 - b. An ostrich prefers to stay in the dreaming stage. When they do this, they do not have to work for real or deal with any stress, and they feel that the dreaming gives them a sense of achievement because they are envisioning their big plans. Unfortunately, those plans stay dreams and don't really ever accomplish anything.
 - c. Self-saboteurs think that by doing nothing, bad things will not happen. They are worried about making mistakes or doing things wrong, therefore, they choose to do nothing. Of course,

this is ineffective for anyone trying to achieve any meaningful goals.

- d. Daredevils believe that by waiting until they reach a deadline is a way to make them push to do better. They believe that starting early is not important and that it will sacrifice their time for pleasure.
 - e. Chickens do what they feel they should do, rather than thinking through what they should be doing.
2. Face the triggers: Once you figure out which of these is your trigger, you need to face it. Learn how to fight off the type of procrastinator you are and you will see results. Of course, this takes a certain amount of honesty and self-reflection on your part.
 3. Take breaks: Sometimes you need to take a break from your task because the brain is not supposed to work nonstop. Even five minutes can make you feel better and can ensure that you are not worn out or tired. Fatigue can sometimes be a big reason for procrastination, so take those breaks so that you can maintain your focus.
 4. Reward yourself: You may find that rewarding yourself can make your work more fun. If you are someone who procrastinates because you are worried about the fun stuff that you are going to miss, then this is a strategy that might work for you. Set up some rewards that you can look forward to that will keep you moving towards your goals.
 5. Find smart ways to keep track of your time: In order to avoid procrastination, you must find a way to keep track of how you spend your time each day. There are apps, such as Rescue Time, that help you keep track of the way you spend your time. It will give you a breakdown of how you spend your time and can help you find out how often you are actually on task. You can turn it into a fun game to figure out if you need have been slacking during times when you thought you were productive.

POP QUIZ: TEST TO SEE HOW MUCH YOUR FOCUS CAN IMPROVE

You have to learn that every distraction is going to sidetrack you from your work, no matter how harmless it seems. Each one can break you from your concentration and can disrupt your momentum. Moreover, distractions will wreak havoc on your productivity and affect the quality of your work.



Therefore, with this chapter, we are going to look at the extent that you have difficulty concentrating. With each of the 15 statements below, give yourself a score from one to five depending on how true each statement is to you. A score of one means that the statement describes you, and a score of five indicates that it does not at all. When you are done, tally the results to see how big of a problem focus is for you.

1. Thoughts that are irrelevant to the situation will constantly surface when you are working

2. Your workspace is always filled with lots of clutter
3. You forget a lot of things and are absentminded
4. You do not set objectives and goals each day
5. Your mind tends to wander during meetings
6. You get distracted easily
7. You become bored quickly
8. You neglect to plan your day
9. You regularly fail to notice some of the important details
10. You try to work on more than one project or task at the same time
11. If you are working on a task, you become fidgety or restless
12. You are often late to appointments and meetings
13. You have trouble remembering where you put personal items
14. Your days do not follow any kind of routine
15. You find that it is difficult to focus on what people say to you during conversations

Remember that you are giving yourself a score between one and five for each of these statements and when you are done, you can add up your points.

If you scored between 60 and 75, you have a lot of control over your attention, probably more than most people. You can already ignore distractions and you have a good handle on getting into a flow state when you work. Even so, you may still find a few of the tips we talk about in this guidebook helpful. Regardless, you certainly are ahead of many people in terms of focus, already. Congratulations!

If you scored between 45 and 59 points, you are doing pretty well with managing your attention, but doing so consistently will continue to remain a challenge. You will find that reading through this guidebook is really going to help you with your focus. You will reap many benefits by reading through the tips.

If you scored between 30 and 44, you have a consistent problem with staying focused on your work. You have trouble concentrating on your activities, studies, and work and sometimes have trouble keeping track of what people say when you speak to them. You are not able to concentrate

for a long period because you are super susceptible to distractions that are in your immediate environment. You will see a big improvement in your concentration if you start using even a few of the tips in this guidebook.

If you scored less than 30, you need a lot of work in order to see productivity go up for you. Mastering your attention is going to require consistent application of many of the tips that we provide in this guidebook. The good news is that this book has many different tips to try out, and if you are able to combine them, you are going to find that focus can be yours for the taking. It's important to realize, however, that you have your work cut out for you.

After looking at the results, take some time to go through and determine which areas you would like to work on the most. After a few weeks or months of trying some of the tips, you can come back and take this test again to see if you scored a bit higher or not. This is a good way to gauge whether you are seeing results or if certain tips are working for you.

If you are enjoying this book or are receiving value from it in any way, then I'd like to ask you for a favor: would you be kind enough to leave a review for this book on Amazon? It'd be greatly appreciated!

[Click here to leave a review on Amazon.com](#)

CHAPTER 2: TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR ENVIRONMENT

SETTING UP THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT

Before we get into some of the tips that you can use to help you see results with your focus, we need to spend some time talking about your environment. The place where you work in is going to play a big role in determining whether you can concentrate for a long period or not. A supportive environment can help you avoid distractions, enter into your flow state, and focus on your work. The wrong type of environment can make even the most focused person have trouble managing their attention for very long.



Some of the things that you should consider for your environment include:

Lighting

You must make sure that you have the proper amount and type of lighting to help manage your attention. Studies show that young people are better able to keep their concentration steady when they are in an environment that is well lit. This is the same for adults who work in offices. If you are in conditions of low light, it can affect not only your focus but also your productivity and mood. When you have plenty of light in your workspace, you are more mentally engaged and happier, which can make concentration easier.

When you sit down to work, take note of how much light is available. If it does not seem to be enough, try to find a new location to work in or consider changing the amount of light to make it better. You should also try to use natural light when possible because this can help to improve workplace productivity and performance.

Background noise

If you are easy to distract, then you will find that any type of noise in your workspace can prevent you from getting work done. Nearby voices, repetitive tapping, ringing, and clicking, and more can all take your attention away from the task, making it hard for you to get anything done.

For some people, background noise makes it difficult to stay on task. However, you need to ask yourself whether all types of noise have this effect on your concentration, or if there are only certain types. For example, you could easily have issues with other people talking around you, but you are just fine listening to classical music. Your attention may be easily diverted by intermittent sounds from a video game, but not the continuous thrum of an air conditioner in the building. It is important to understand which sounds you are sensitive to, in terms of distraction, and which sounds (the right music, etc.) that can actually help put you in the right flow state.

Some people must have their surroundings completely silent in order to focus, while others do better with some white noise. Still, others work best when they have a buzz of activity around them. Everyone is a bit different, so you may need to experiment to find what kind of noise works best for you.

Comfort

The amount of comfort that you get out of your office is going to affect how much you can concentrate directly. If you feel uncomfortable in your area, whether it is from a physical ailment, the position of your desk, or even your chair, you will find that your focus will go to the feeling of being uncomfortable rather than on doing your work.

If you think that you are not feeling comfortable right now, then a few different things could be detracting from your comfort while you work, including:

- The position of your monitor to your personal line of vision
- How much time you have sat still without taking a break
- Your posture
- How your clothes fit
- How your shoes fit
- The height of the chair and the desk

These factors are going to greatly determine whether you are feeling comfortable at work, so they are important when determining whether you will be able to focus.

The next thing that you can examine is your posture. If you are not sitting up straight, you may be causing unneeded stress on your body, which could eventually lead to injury if severe enough. To evaluate your posture, ask yourself these questions:

- Is the normal curvature of the spine in place when you sit?
- Have you distributed your weight evenly between both hips?
- Are your knees bent at a 90-degree angle?
- Are your feet able to stay planted on the ground flat?
- Can your back touch the back of the chair?
- Is your back straight with the shoulders back rather than slouching?

You can also look at the chair that you are sitting in. If you have to spend the majority of your day in a chair that is not very comfortable, it can be difficult to enjoy your work or to focus at all. Some of the questions that you can ask about your chair include:

- Is there so much padding in the chair that it causes you to feel sleepy?
- Does the chair allow you to adjust the back support, armrests, and other features that your body needs?
- Does it offer you the support you need for proper sitting posture?
- Does it offer breathability while you sit?
- Do you get enough support on the hips and back to make you feel comfortable?
- Does it constantly roll around so that you have to use your feet as well as the core muscles in order to keep your position the same?

You should also take some time to measure the distance between the monitor and your eyes. The ideal amount of space is between 24 and 35 inches. The top of the monitor should be at the same height as your sight line to avoid eye or neck strain.

Sitting still for a long period can cause you to feel uncomfortable, even if you are in a good chair, maintain good posture, and have a workspace that is optimized. You should consider taking frequent breaks and getting up to stretch occasionally or even go on a walk. This could help get your blood pumping, and help keep you alert, since often times, working for long periods of time requires a sedentary state. Doing this can help to relieve some of the tension you feel in the shoulders and neck and it can help you to get back to your work after the break, feeling refreshed and ready to focus.

Temperature

The temperature of the place you are working in can make a big difference, as well. Some people cannot work and focus if they are too warm. It can make them sleepy, which makes it hard to focus. Others find that if it gets too cold, the same thing can happen as well. It seems that the ideal temperature for most people is between 68 to 77 degrees. If you have any control over the temperature in your office while you are working, try to keep the temperature near these numbers.

However, you may not be the one who is in control of the thermostat at your work. If you do not have a say in it and it does not seem to be at a temperature that works for you, there are a few things you can do:

- Dressing in layers protects you if you are in a cold office. If it is too warm on a particular day, then just start removing the layers until you are comfortable.
- Bring a small fan to help you stay cool or a small space heater to keep you warm.
- Have some liquid cold gel packs available. You can place these under your feet when you are warm.
- Iced water can be a great option to keep your internal temperature on track.
- If you are using a desk lamp to help with the lighting, consider going with an LED bulb. The incandescent bulbs create more heat and can make the area much warmer, while the LED will not do this.
- Open a window if you find that the air outside is cooler compared to the air in the office.
- Bring a sweater or a light blanket to the office if you find that the temperature is too low.
- Carry a scarf to put around your neck.

These are just a few of the things that you should consider when it comes to the environment that you are working in. You may also need to pay attention to the presence of others, the air quality, and the scents that are around you. Make sure to experiment a little bit with your work environment and some of these other factors to ensure that you are able to set up your workspace to make it easier for you to focus.

HABIT NO. 1: YOU DO NOT NEED TO BE PERFECT

When it comes to focusing, your mental environment is just as important as your physical environment and, sometimes, the biggest issue with our ability to focus is ourselves. If you are working on a report, responding to an email that will take some time, or writing an article, you could harm your own progress if you always have to stop to research details, validate data, cite sources, or edit what has been written. Each time that you stop, you disrupt your workflow. Each one interrupts you and can take away that focus.



This is a common problem for perfectionists, who are not able to proceed with their tasks unless they feel that their work is of the highest quality and absolutely perfect. While it is nice to hold yourself to high standards, and you should never hand in unsatisfactory work; this can be a problem for some people who cannot seem to focus. Perfectionism is going to prevent you from ever being able to master your attention and actually getting things done during the day.

Learning how to tame your inner perfectionist will help you focus on the task, and you will be able to do work for longer periods. If you find that your perfectionism is regularly making you stop to interrupt yourself, these tips may help you prevent this:

- Work in ten-minute time chunks. During this time, do not make edits or correct any mistakes, even if there is something that is glaringly wrong with your project. Doing this will help train your mind to work without interruptions. A word of warning though—this is going to be difficult at first. Your inner perfectionist is going to protest, but it becomes easier over time.
- If you end up needing to look up something that you can't remember, just fill it in with "XYZ" in the project. Do not stop during those ten minutes to look up the information that you need. Keep on working. This allows your workflow to continue smoothly and seamlessly. You can always go back and fill in the blanks later on if you need too.
- After the ten minutes are up, you can stop and review your work. You can then fix the mistakes and add in the details that you skipped over earlier. This allows you to hand in good work, but you will train yourself not to fix every little thing every few minutes.

It will not take long to learn that this approach is more efficient than always interrupting yourself to check your work. It will streamline your workflow, which makes it easier for you to get into the zone and get more done. Consequently, you will also find that this simple process can make it easier to focus while you also ignore major distractions.

Your inner perfectionist has good intentions and wants you to provide the highest-quality work possible. The problem here is that it is going to become somewhat obsessive over this goal, and it will always encourage you to interrupt your workflow repeatedly. Moreover, this can keep you away from gaining any of the momentum that you actually need to get your work done.

If you are able to tame your inner perfectionist, you will improve your ability to concentrate. You will get more done, turn in great quality work, and get it all done in less time than before.

HABIT NO. 2: LEARN WHAT YOUR TRIGGERS ARE

A common assumption is that you become distracted because you are bored. With nothing there to engage your mind properly, the attention is drawn towards something else that promises to do this, even if it will only succeed for a moment.



The truth of the matter is that distractions are going to be triggered. It could be external or internal stimuli are going to break into our concentration and will pull us off the task we are working on. If you are tired of fighting with these distractions, it is so important to identify what triggers them to start with.

We are going to first address some of the internal triggers that are likely responsible for disrupting your focus. Some of these are going to be psychological in nature and others are going to be more physical in nature:

- Moodiness
- Pain, such as a backache or a headache
- Frustration

- Restlessness or boredom
- A tendency to procrastinate
- Food cravings

These stimuli can make you more susceptible to distraction. For example, if you are having a craving for a candy bar, it may be more difficult to concentrate on the task. If you procrastinate on a regular basis, the brain may be trained to find different ways to divert your attention to other places. Depression, pain, frustration, and boredom can also erode away at your attention if you let them.

If you are looking to keep these distractions at bay, you need to address them. You must come up with a strategy and then implement it to help suppress or avoid them. For example, if you get headaches when you eat sugary foods, it may be a good idea to avoid sugar before you get started on work. Know what your triggers are and how to avoid them, and you will have a better chance of staying focused.

There are also some external stimuli that can make you more susceptible to distraction. Some of the external stimuli to watch out for include:

- Noisy co-workers
- The internet
- Television news programs
- Television
- Social media
- Phone calls
- Texts
- Emails

All of us have had these affect us at some time or another. We may say that we will just check out emails one time, and then an hour later we are still on them. The same is true when we start searching things online or looking at social media. If you keep your phone near you, it can be tempting to check it all the time to see if someone has texted you and to answer any texts that come in. All of these are going to make it more difficult for you to keep your focus on the work that you need to get done.

This is why it is so important to start realizing the reasons that you are distracted. It is only by being able to identify your personal external triggers that you can come up with a good strategy that will help you to avoid these triggers.

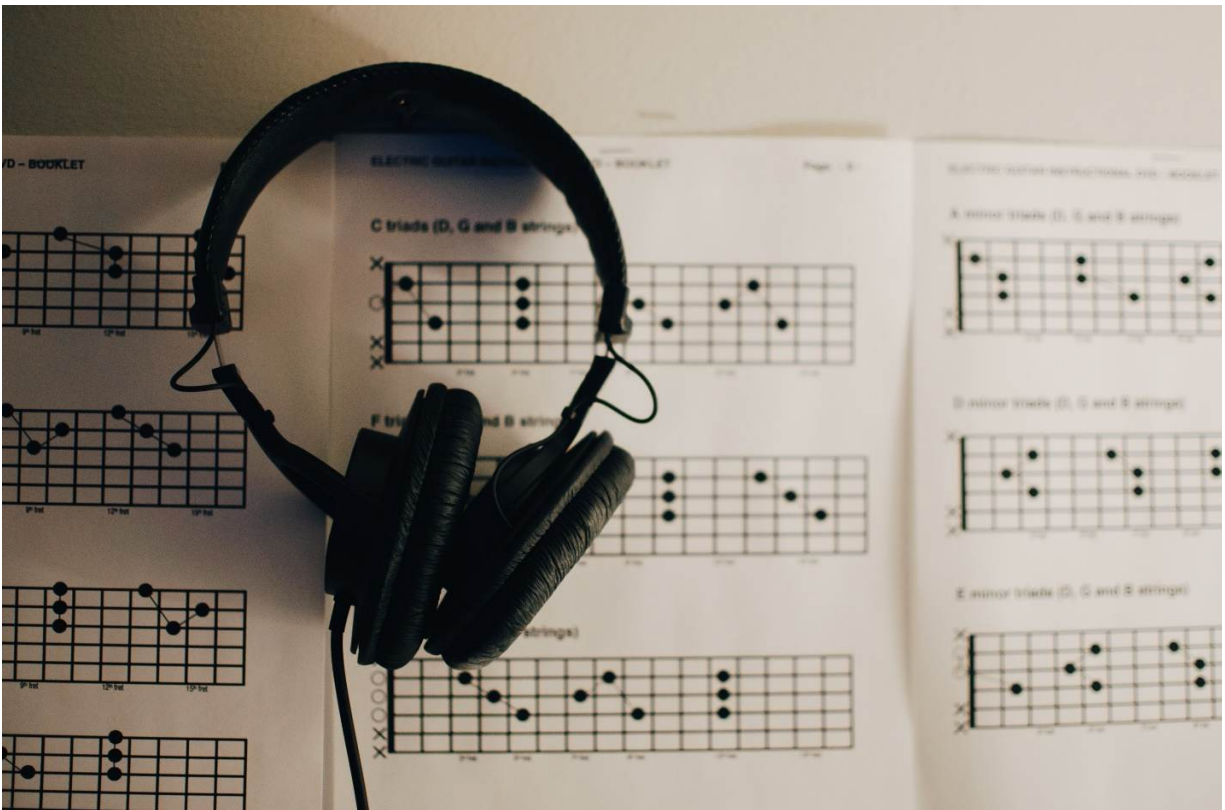
If your trigger is the phone, turn it off and put it across the room or even in another room if possible, until you are done with your work. If your trigger is social media or the internet, turn off your Wi-Fi and get the work done before you are allowed to look at either. If your trigger is email, but you still need to check it a few times a day for work, pick two or three times during the day to check. Outside of these times, and while you are working, you are not allowed to look at your email, no matter what the reason is.

Each person is going to have a different external trigger, and the one (or more than one, for some people) that bothers you is going to determine the strategy that you will need to come up with. You can turn off the television, keep your phone far away, and stay offline to help you avoid these triggers and to keep you on track. Of course, this also ultimately requires discipline on your part.

It is important to learn how to identify your personal triggers for distraction, both the internal and the external triggers, and then learn how to address them properly. When you are able to keep those triggers to a minimum, you can master your attention and focus better, and it is easier to keep your focus on the task.

HABIT NO. 3: MUSIC CAN HELP YOU TO GET INTO THE FLOW

Music serves two purposes for those who are trying to concentrate on their work—it helps to drown out the noises around you and helps you to enter a flow state to get more done. Noise can sometimes make it difficult to keep your attention on a task, but when you are able to control the noise—playing music, for instance—you will be able to focus better.



If you work in an office setting, a simple noise like your coworkers talking can distract you. In a coffee shop, the making of lattes and cappuccinos can distract you. At home, your kids watching television or playing can take away your attention. Music can drown out some of the noise, or at least push it enough into the background so that it no longer is a distraction.

For some people, even the silence around them can be too distracting because they are used to the noise. If this is you, music can replace the

silence and make it easier for you to concentrate.

Music has the power to help you get into a state of mind of sharper focus so that everything around you becomes part of the background. Musicians, athletes, and gamers call this “being in the zone,” and it can benefit you in the same way.

The key here is the type of music that you listen to. Most people find that the best type of music to help them with this process is instrumental music. Music with lyrics can be a distraction. You may be able to listen to songs with lyrics if you are familiar enough with the song that the lyrics will not bother you. There are certain people that might have their attention taken away, once they actually start listening to the lyrics and attempting to decipher the song. You may need to experiment to find what works the best for you.

Classical music is the best instrumental music for concentration because the tones will keep you “in the zone” for as long as you need and, musically speaking, it does not have a lot of distractions. Although classical music does not work for everyone, most people find that it gives them the ability to focus right away, so it’s worth trying.

When choosing classical music, there are many options. You can choose one song that you really like and just put it on a loop while you’re working, or you can choose an album with a variety of songs to play while you work. There are also many classical music options on YouTube and other places online. Just try what works and go from there. You might find out that you enjoy it more than you thought you would!

HABIT NO. 4: DISCONNECTING CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

If you are like most workers who complain about focus, you will find that the internet and your phone are the two distractions that threaten your focus the most. Together, if you let them, they can make it impossible for you to stay on track and get things done.



Your phone can be a problem because it gives you instant and continuous access to social media, emails, and texts. Each message produces an audible alert, and even if you turn the phone's volume down, it sends a light that you will see when something new comes in. These alerts can be big distractions, and they will disrupt your concentration, even if you can somehow manage to ignore the phone after the sound goes off.

The internet can be an even worse problem. One search on Google can end up leading you down a rabbit hole that could take up hours of your time. Add in social media, internet research, and emailing, your attention span is quickly deteriorating. This can affect even those who truly planned on working, as there is an endless amount of content out there.

The solution to this problem is to disconnect while you are working. You can turn off your phone completely and leave it in another part of the room. If you are able, turn off the Wi-Fi as well. This helps eliminate the potential for distractions right from the beginning.

When you are on a break or are done with your work for the day, then it is fine to grab the phone and reconnect again. You can then read and respond to any missed texts that are important, spend some time on Facebook, or check your email. However, once the break is over, these things need to be turned off.

If you are working and find that you need to be online to look up something related to your task, do not be tempted to go online immediately. Make a note of it and then keep working. You can research the item at a later time, rather than letting it slow you down.

This will not always be easy, as you will want to reach for your phone and check to see if anyone texted you. Leaving your phone across the room will help you avoid temptation. You may want to get online and check social media or check to see if someone sent you an important email. Avoid the temptation as much as possible. You will be amazed at how much more you can get done during the day without it.

You will find that when you take the time to disconnect, you are going to feel less stress, more relaxation, and you will be better able to concentrate. You will not be a victim of distractions as much, and you will be able to catch up on all those social media updates, texts, and emails when you are caught up in your work.

When you disconnect your internet and phone, you are allowing your brain a chance to focus on things that matter. Your work needs to be done first. You can always come back to the phone and the internet later. It's important

to remember that they are not “going anywhere”. However, you have to disconnect from them and make a promise to yourself that you will not pay attention to them while you finish the work.

CHAPTER 3: PLANNING TO BEAT PROCRASTINATION

HABIT NO. 5: CREATE A DAILY ROUTINE THAT WORKS FOR YOU

Some people are determined to be spontaneous. They think that they can do whatever they want, whenever they want, and that's the way they like it. However, most people thrive on routine. Your brain prefers structure—it likes to know what is coming next. Your brain needs to be able to focus on what's coming next, rather than be distracted by the endless possibilities that you may do next.



You will find that productive people follow a daily routine because it helps them get things done. They are more able to devote their cognitive

resources to tasks that actually require their attention, which allows them to work in a manner that is more efficient.

When you are productive, you do not need to worry about whether there is any motivation to act. Nor do you need to worry about whether you have the right amount of willpower. Your routine will prompt you to take the next action that needs to be done.

Think about the daily patterns that you have. You follow them even if you have not realized it yet. For most people, these patterns are going to be executed in short periods. Because of this, most people are going to miss the increased focus that longer, more comprehensive routines offer.

For example, you probably have a morning ritual that you follow when you first wake up in the morning that includes something like the following:

- Brush your teeth
- Go to the bathroom
- Take a shower
- Blow dry your hair
- Put on deodorant
- Apply makeup if you are a lady
- Get dressed
- Eat breakfast

You probably do this on a daily basis, without even noticing it. As you execute this series of actions, you just go through it without thinking about what you need to do next. You have been through this same routine for years by now. Each action, along with the overall order, is now a part of your routine, which has been ingrained and embedded in your mind. Because of this, you are able to complete the whole routine efficiently without ever being distracted from it and you focus, subconsciously, on each action. It's pretty obvious that all of us are able to think about something else while brushing our teeth or taking a shower.

You can use this same kind of attentional quirk to help you stay focused when you are trying to get things done at work. Simply creating a daily routine that will help you take action on recurring tasks can be a great help.

For example, suppose that you must get each of the following done during the day:

- Checking your email
- Returning all phone calls
- Creating three daily reports for your boss
- Meeting with your coworkers to go over a project.

Simply create a routine that works the best for your needs, and when you create this new routine, consider adding in some chunking to it. This can make it easier for you to know what needs to be done and when you are going to take breaks. This makes completing these tasks and taking breaks easier when they are at the same time each day.

Over time, and with enough repetition, this pattern will become deeply rooted in your consciousness. Your brain will learn what to expect and what is going to come next. As a result, it will be much easier for you to manage your own attention. You will be less prone to distraction, and it is easier than ever for you to stay on task for the things that are the most important.

HABIT NO. 6: CAPTURE YOUR IDEAS QUICKLY

One of the biggest things that will distract you during the day is the unexpressed ideas and thoughts that go through your mind. They are just going to float around in your head, getting in the way of your focus because they want some attention to. You may want to remember them for later, but it may take some time before you can give them attention. Moreover, holding them there will just impede the focus that you are working so hard on.



For example, you may be hard at work on a project, and then a promising idea pops into your head. You try to ignore it so that you can keep working and stay on task. Nevertheless, the idea continues to hang in there, and it is hard to keep your mind on the current task.

It is healthy to have these ideas. Creativity is a great thing no matter what industry you are working in. The problem is that these random ideas, if they are not taken care of, can really destroy your focus and makes it hard to

keep yourself productive. The challenge is that you do not want to forget those ideas, even though you do not want to let them break your concentration and momentum. However, how are you supposed to address these ideas in a way that still lets you maintain your focus?

The best option to try out is to record those thoughts right away. This allows you to store them to review later without having it pull you away from the work for more than a few seconds. It allows you to document this creativity, while not derailing you from your current work. When you are ready to record your ideas to help you stay on task and focused, you can use one of the following tools:

- Whiteboard
- Google Keep
- Todoist
- OneNote
- Evernote
- Pen and paper
- Digital voice recorder
- Chalkboard

When a random, but promising, thought comes into your mind, you can write it down, dictate it into your recorder, or store it somewhere online using one of the programs listed above. Do not let that thought just float around in your head. Once you document it, it becomes so much easier to let it go and move on with the work at hand.

According to the creator of the Getting Things Done system, David Allen, these errant thoughts are open loops. They are intentions that you have not had time to categorize yet. They are going to represent the things that we need or want to do. If you leave them open, they will keep on nagging you and will pull at your attention. Of course, this will affect your overall productivity if not managed properly.

To be successful with your focus, you need to close these loops. Storing them in another location to look at later is a great option. Otherwise, leaving those thoughts there will just tax your memory, distract you, and can make you more inclined to procrastinate. You can choose the method that works

the best for you, just make sure that you have a system in place to store those thoughts so that you can remember them for later, without letting them ruin your concentration.

HABIT NO. 7: MAKE A TO-DO LIST EACH DAY

A to-do list can be a great way to keep you on task during the day. It will help you record all the tasks, projects, and items that you need to address at some point, whether it is today or on another day. It will help you get those tasks out of your head, where they can pose as the problematic open loops, and onto paper that you can review when needed. When you get these tasks written down, you can focus and zero in on the task that you need to get done first.



This effect is related to the Zeigarnik effect, which asserts that the unfinished tasks that are in our heads will draw more attention compared to the finished tasks. This is because the former are open loops. When these tasks stay in our heads, they are going to pose intrusive thoughts that can distract you and will make it almost impossible to concentrate.

This is where a to-do list can come in handy because it will resolve the problem. When you stop to record all of your tasks and thoughts, you can purge them out of your short-term memory and keep them from becoming open loops. When you put them on a list, you can close up the loops, allowing your mind to concentrate without worrying that you will forget to

work on something later. In addition, they can help with attention management because they will remind you later about what you need to get done.

For example, let us say that you just started a project that has many individual actions. If you write out these actions on a list, you do not have the added worry of forgetting any of them. You just keep the list with you and work down it, crossing items off once they are complete. This keeps the process simple and can make it easier to keep on task. Moreover, you don't have to worry about forgetting your objectives or ideas when you write them down.

Once you are able to remove these items from your mind, you can stop worrying about them. You know that all of the tasks are written down and you can look them over whenever it works out for you. With less stress and a reminder from the to-do list, you will get it all done without all of the worries from before.

There are several different mediums that you can use to help make a to-do list. The medium is not that important, as long as you make sure that you record the items or projects that need to be done to help you keep focus. The basic options for you to choose from to help you focus include:

- Dry erase board
- Cloud-based tools
- Paper and pen

For many people, keeping with the simplicity of working with pen and paper is usually the best. You can write everything out, take notes, cross things off, and easily take your to-do list wherever you need to go for work.

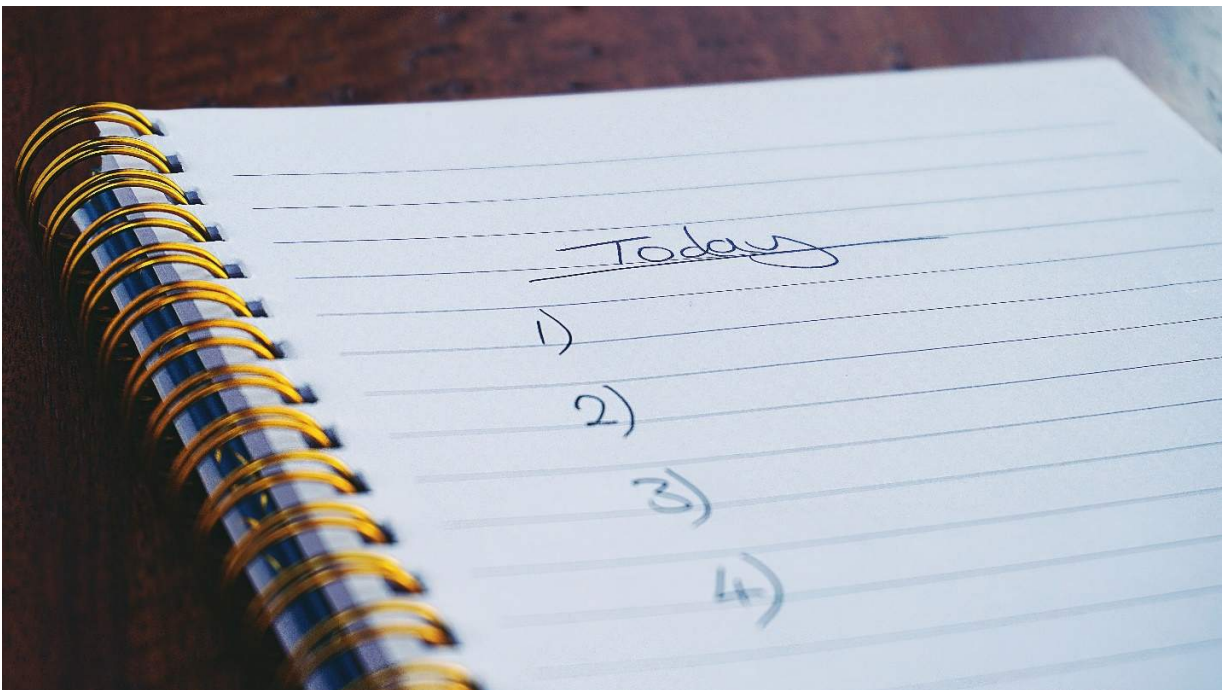
Like what's been discussed in Chapter 9, you might want to limit yourself to working to five important tasks. Listing five high-priority tasks on your to-do list will help you better focus and be more productive. Not just that, but having a smaller to-do list will also make you feel more relaxed throughout the day. On the other hand, filling your plate with too many tasks will just rather make you feel pestered, pressured, and distracted. Your

goal is not to finish as many tasks as possible, but to improve the quality of your work even if that means working on a smaller to-do list.

Organizing your tasks with a to-do list and keeping it short and concise — prioritizing the five most important tasks for the day — will help you to have better time and focus management. Not only will you simply complete a task, but you finish it with finesse and quality.

HABIT NO. 8: LIMIT THE TASKS YOU NEED TO GET DONE EACH DAY TO JUST FIVE

The more stuff that you put on your plate, the less likely you will be able to focus on just one task at a time. As you are working on that task, all the other ones are going to demand your attention and will make it hard to keep your focus on one thing. Moreover, if your list gets too long, the stress will start to creep in and erode your concentration even more, making it almost impossible to get stuff done. The work will feel overwhelming at that point.



The best thing to do is look at your daily list of things to do and limit it to just five. Five is enough that you can still get quite a bit done during the day, but few enough that you can just focus on one at a time without worrying about whether you will forget something. If you have a smaller list, you know that there will be enough time to complete all the tasks on the list. You can also avoid the feeling of being pestered by all the other things that still need your attention.

It is easy to overestimate how much you are able to get done during a day. You may want to get it all done, and then you make long to-do lists with too many tasks. Juggling these tasks can cause you a ton of stress, making you feel like you are playing catch up all the time. It will not take long for you to realize that you will never be able to get all those tasks done in the allotted time, which will leave you frustrated. And of course, it will take your focus away.

When you learn how to limit yourself to five tasks in a day, you can effectively avoid this issue. You will have a better handle on everything that is on the list. You will know exactly what needs to be done during the day, and since the list is smaller, you can have the confidence to know that each task will be done on time. It's a number that is significant, without being too cumbersome.

What is the result of all this? A smaller to-do list means that you can feel more relaxed during the day, have more creativity, and be better able to concentrate on what you are doing right now. In addition, the quality of your work will greatly improve.

It is easy to feel that we need to take on everything in our modern world. We want to be there for everyone and get all the tasks done as quickly as possible. We live in a world of constant distraction, stimulation, and sensation. However, taking on too much can cause stress, and makes it difficult to get things done.

It is fine to take some of the pressure off yourself, which will help you get ahead in life simply because you can take the stress off and focus better. Each day, review what is on your to-do list and figure out which tasks are not essential or at least can wait until later. You may decide that they are not necessary at all and cross them off completely or reschedule them for another date that works better with your schedule. The only things that should be left on your to-do list are five important items that you must get done, or want to get done, during that day.

If you do happen to get through those five items, and there is still a decent amount of time left in your day, you can consider addressing the others. It is a bonus if you have time to work on the other things, but it is not a

requirement for you to feel accomplished. The key to this exercise is to remove all the extraneous items from the main list so that you can zero in on the items that are the most important. You will quickly see how this can help your concentration.

HABIT NO. 9: SCHEDULE OUT YOUR DAY INTO TIME CHUNKS

Some may call it the Pomodoro Technique and others will call it blocking. Still, others call it chunking. No matter what name you give to it, there are two basic steps to making it work for your focus:

- Choose a specific amount of time to work on a specific task.
- Spend that time only working on that task.

The amount of time that you allot for each task can vary. Sometimes it may be as short as ten minutes, and other times it could be five hours or more, depending on the task, or tasks, that you are trying to accomplish.



There are three main advantages to dividing your day into chunks:

- It makes you more productive: By allotting a scheduled amount of time for a task, you can set a deadline for it. When you set a deadline, you are effectively shortening the amount of time you will work on that task.

- It can make you more relaxed: You do not need to feel stressed out about whether you have enough time to complete your to-do list. Your schedule will have many time chunks that are meant to help you get your to-do items done. This can eliminate the mystery of what will happen during your day.
- It can sharpen your focus: The chunk that you allot for specific items ensures that you are going to stay on task. You know right from the start that your attention will be only on the task that you have in front of you. You will avoid the temptation to work on other things, so your focus can be on point.

The next question is how to arrange your day into time chunks. First, you should have some idea of how much time is needed to complete your tasks so you can make sure you assign enough time to each of your tasks. It's also important to be realistic and accurate when it comes to these time chunks, as well.

Then, once you have assigned time chunks for all of your tasks, you need to put them on your calendar. This helps to block off time and see your schedule visually, effectively reducing issues with double-booking your schedule. Any calendar will work; just pick one that you like the best.

Finally, you need to schedule breaks within the time chunks, if necessary. For instance, if you set up a time chunk that is longer than 45 minutes, you need to include at least one break, or if the time chunk is more than 90 minutes, schedule several breaks. This is important when you are working on presentations or projects that are going to take you a little more time. This ensures that you get up, move a bit, and give your brain a rest so it can maintain focus. Here are some examples of how you might schedule your breaks using this system:

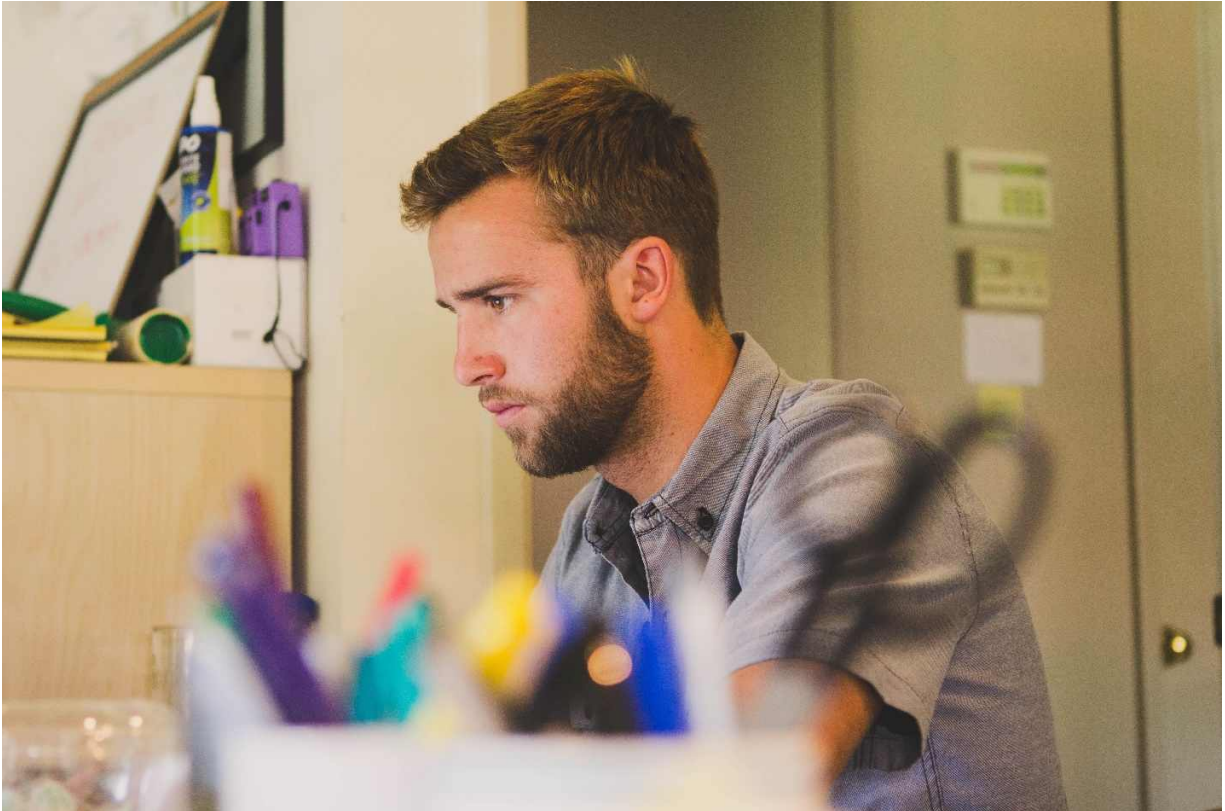
- Work for 45 minutes
- Take a 10-minute break
- Work for another 45 minutes
- Take a 15-minute break
- Work for 45 minutes
- Take a 20-minute break

Take notice of how the length of the break increases after each of your work sessions. This is because staying focused for a full 45 minutes can be hard on the brain. It can tax you mentally. To help you stay fresh so you can keep getting work done, you must make sure that your brain has plenty of time to relax, which is even more important if the work at hand requires deep concentration.

By the time you get through the third and longest break, you can still get back to your work and feel refreshed, even though you have been working on the project for a few hours at this point.

HABIT NO. 10: LEARN HOW TO SINGLE-TASK

In our busy world, most people seem to be impressed by those who are able to multitask. The ability to manage several different tasks at the same time can seem remarkable. Society values and praises it, so most of us want to be multitaskers. We think that multitasking is the key to getting things done.



However, the sad reality about multitasking is it just does not work. Researchers have found that trying to do too many tasks at once actually makes us more prone to distraction, which, in turn, impairs our ability to perform the task. A leading neuroscientist at MIT, Earl Miller, elaborates, “Switching from task to task, you think you’re actually paying attention to everything around you at the same time. But you’re actually not.”

Our brains are not actually able to attend to more than one task at a time, even if we think that it can. Rather, our brains attend to one task, and then another, and then another. When you try to attend to more than one task at a

time, your brain is simply moving back and forth between them. This is not multitasking, it is task switching.

Task switching can cause all sorts of issues when it comes to your focus. First, it is going to require that several tasks remain unfinished at the same time. Remember that those unfinished tasks are open loops that can distract your focus. Second, your quality of work is going to be diminished and your error rate will increase with the number of tasks that you are juggling, which will have a negative effect on your productivity.

Think about it for a moment. Do you have a friend or family member who is considered a habitual multitasker? Have you ever tried to talk to that person and get information out of them when they were trying to get all those tasks done? It is most likely that you found that to be a frustrating experience. The individual was probably having a hard time focusing on what you were saying or what they should say back, so they could not really contribute anything meaningful to the conversation. This is a result of task switching and how it can cripple your concentration.

The best way to help improve your focus is to learn how to single-task—only put your attention on one task at a time. Even though it may be difficult at times; try to resist the temptation to multitask.

If you are someone who is a habitual multi-tasker, this is going to take some time to accomplish. You are used to trying to get as much done as possible at the same time. However, look at how it is affecting your workflow. Are you easily distracted and missing things because you are handling too much at once? Is your productivity slipping and are you getting in trouble at work? Are there now more errors in your work than before?

These are all the effects of multi-tasking, and the issue just gets worse the more things you are trying to get done at once, and the more complex they are. Write down your list of things that need to be done during the day and then pick just one to concentrate on. The others will still be there when you are done. Moreover, if you just work on one thing at a time, you can get it done faster and then move on to the next task on your list.

HABIT NO. 11: BATCH PROCESS SIMILAR TASKS

For this tip, we are going to look at batch processing, a concept familiar to those who work on computers. A computer executes a series of jobs or programs without needing to have a manual intervention for each one. The programs and jobs are queued during the day to be executed at a particular time.



In the context of a computer, the advantage of batch processing is that it puts less of a load on the processor and cores of the computer, and it does not require someone to be there to complete each individual job. No one has to be sitting at the computer to make sure that the job gets done because the computer is set up to just do it all on its own.

You will find that your brain works in a similar way. If you are able to learn how to leverage this attentional attribute, you will experience increased productivity and focus. Let's look at how you can use this batch processing to your advantage.

First, decide everything you need to accomplish in your day and write them down so that you can see them all laid out in front of you. Next, review your list to determine whether there are similar tasks. Then, group the similar tasks together. Some examples include:

- Emails to read and respond to
- Chores to get done
- Reports to complete
- Meetings and appointments to schedule
- Phone calls to make
- Bills to pay
- Blog posts to write

After you have grouped your tasks, you need to schedule time, such as 20 minutes, on your daily calendar, for each group. This is the time when you will focus on just the specific items that fit into the group you scheduled for that time. When you do this, you are prompting your brain to batch process the tasks. There is an advantage to this because the tasks are similar and addressing them together will require fewer resources from the brain. The brain does not need to be prompted to perform each one because it gets into a rhythm and can do each one automatically.

Let us say that your first block of time is to pay bills. This is something that you do each month for years on end, and because of this, your brain is very familiar with how the process works, so it can go through a series of “jobs” to complete the batch. When you look at a bill, your brain will know to look at how much is owed, write a check, and then record the details.

Your brain is able to do all of these without having to put in many attentional resources. It will execute each part repeatedly until all of the jobs in that batch are done. In addition, you can do it quickly since the brain will not have to spend a ton of time thinking about it.

Batch processing can help you sidestep any types of costs that could come up when you task switch. Imagine what it would be like if you paid one bill, and then you moved over to working on a report for ten minutes, and then you made a phone call. After the phone call was done, you sent out an

email, read through a memo, scheduled a meeting, and cleared off your desk a bit before paying yet another bill.

This all seems a little random and all over the place, but it is something that most people end up doing with their day. Known as transaction processing, this results in every task requiring your full attention. It is not very efficient and can leave you feeling very frustrated because you are unable to focus.

Transaction processing imposes large amounts of task-switching costs on your focus and attention. It ends up taking a lot more time because you are switching from one type of task to another instead of working on one type of task at a time. It also makes it difficult to concentrate on the task. Moreover, with transaction processing, you will find that distractions abound.

The batch processing that we discussed will be beneficial in helping you focus. You will stay sharp mentally for a long period. It can help you to maintain the focus you need to get the job done on time, fight distractions, and even stay on task better than ever before.

One thing to keep in mind is that batch processing is most effective when you are working on tasks that do not require much critical or creative thinking. It's important to remember that it works best within this specific context. Therefore, something like doing household chores, paying bills, scheduling an appointment or meeting, or answering emails, will fit into this category. If you are doing a lot of deep research, creating an elaborate system for something, or working on some complex math problems, you are going to need a lot more cognitive resources, and batching will not work well.

However, for those simple things that you need to get done in your to-do list for the day, batch processing can be a great tool. It can help you stay on task and will ensure that you can get things done as efficiently as possible.

HABIT NO. 12: DON'T WASTE YOUR DAY IN MEETINGS

If you work in corporate America, you probably sigh or cringe when you hear about meetings. It is often a waste of time for most workers, as they have to sit and listen to others talk, often about things that are not relevant. Moreover, any time that a meeting is on your schedule, it means that you have a block of time, usually an hour or more, that is lost, and you won't be able to use it to get stuff done.



Although some meetings are important and can help you get more done, because you meet together with others who are working on the same project as you, these meetings take a lot of time out of your schedule. Most of them last for over an hour, which is a lot of valuable time that you could be using elsewhere.

Often, there is no reason for a meeting to last that long. For the most part, meetings last too long because many of the attendees would rather sit in a meeting than get their work done. Sometimes, there is food provided, which is not going to help hurry things along.

Over time, this ends up wasting a lot of time. A better option is to try to avoid meetings as much as possible. When someone wants to discuss something, and they want to schedule a meeting to do so, counter by suggesting that you both discuss the matter right then and there.

In most cases, the topic that the other person wanted to discuss did not really need an hour, and it often did not even need half an hour. It could usually be covered in ten minutes, and sometimes, in less than five minutes. However, if you had scheduled that meeting to discuss the topic, you could have wasted a whole hour of your day.

Clearing your schedule of all those meetings will produce many benefits. First, you will be able to use that time to get more work done, especially work that needs a lot of deep thought and concentration. Without having to interrupt your work to attend a meeting that was not necessary, you could get into a flow state much easier. This allows you to focus on whatever task is in front of you and build up momentum to get it done.

Think about your typical day. How much of it is spent in meetings that do not really get anywhere—meetings that probably could have been handled in a five-minute email? Do you often wish that you could reclaim that time for something that was more productive? Are you tired of getting into a workflow and then having to set it aside, cutting off your concentration, just to go to a meeting that doesn't really hold any value to you?

If this sounds like how you spend the majority of your day, there are a few things that you can do to change it.

- When someone suggests a meeting, presumably for an hour or more, suggest that the two of you have an impromptu meeting right then. Often the meeting is only going to take a few minutes, and you can still solve the problem without having to waste all of your time.

- If you end up having to go to a meeting, try to suggest that it is done while you are standing. This can hurry things along because people are not as comfortable with standing as they are sitting, so they will finish things faster and leave the room.
- If possible, try not to go to a meeting where food is present. Businesses try to reward people for showing up to meetings, but it wastes more of your time. Food is going to lead to comfort, which quells the incentive of the people there to hurry up. It often leads to people staying longer than they should.
- If you are the one who has to take on the responsibility of scheduling a meeting, try to allocate a small window of time to get it done. For example, rather than scheduling the meeting to take an hour, only schedule it for 15 minutes. It is likely you can get all of the information out there in that amount of time. Moreover, the fact that you did not waste your time or the time of anyone else is an added bonus.
- Avoid going to meetings that include more than 10 people because they are going to be long and are often going to be about topics that do not even pertain to you.
- Ask that the meetings stay on the stated agenda. A lot of time can be eaten up by individuals who try to move off topic, and this does not carry any value to you at all.
- See if it is possible for all meetings to be scheduled for after lunchtime. Schedule all necessary meetings in the afternoon, when your focus may be waning a bit anyway.

When you are able to spend less time in meetings, you can spend more of your time on the tasks and projects that you need to get done. The bigger advantage, though, is that it allows you to be free to work in a state that is more focused. You will not have to disrupt your own workflow arbitrarily in order to attend meetings that do not hold much value for you, which wastes your time and slows down your own productivity.

The result of this is that you will be much better at managing your attention and fighting off distractions. So, work hard to avoid those meetings,

especially the ones that are going to be long and hold no value for you, and spend your time actually getting stuff done.

CHAPTER 4: ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE RIGHT NOW TO IMPROVE YOUR FOCUS

HABIT NO. 13: DECLUTTER YOUR WORKSPACE

Clutter is going to have a big influence on the way that you are able to work. If you are disorganized at the office, you will find that it will compete for your attention and can make it difficult to work. Clutter seems to call for you to do something with it, and you may run into the issue of never being able to find the things you need to get work done, ruining your workflow. Learning how to declutter your workspace can make a big difference in how well you concentrate. Some of the tips you can use include:

- **Start from the beginning:** It is likely that you have tried to declutter in the past, but it just did not work for you. If doing this a little bit at a time does not work, you may need to go the other way. Take everything off your desk and out of the drawers and add them to a box. Then go back to work. When you find that you need an item, put it back on the desk. After a few days, if there are still some things in the box, you most likely do not need them and can get rid of them.
- **Give it all a flow:** Now that you have taken some time to figure out what you want to keep, you need to figure out where to place it. The location of your things is just as important because you want to have quick access to the things you use a lot. You can organize the desk drawers by importance, making sure the stuff you use the most often is in the closest drawer. How this is organized will depend on how you work.
- **Tame the cables:** You should take some time to organize the cables that are on top of and under your desk. Rain gutters are a great management tool for these cables, or you can get something that is specifically designed for organizing cables. You can even consider purchasing technology that requires fewer wires and cables as well.

- Find your trouble spots: It can sometimes be difficult to look at your workspace and figure out how cluttered it is. Consider taking some pictures and then look at it from a different perspective. You may be surprised at how much the clutter will pop out at you. This can help you find your clutter trouble spots so you can work on them.
- Make your workspace larger: If you do end up having a lot of stuff that is important and you cannot get rid of it (but be honest about this), then you may need to add some extra storage or find ways to increase your workspace. Vertical storage may be your friend here. You can raise up the monitor to have space under it or you can use storage containers to put things on the walls or on shelves.
- Create some hidden storage: When you find that traditional shelves are not going to work for you, there are still a few other options. You may want to try out pegboard, an effective way to hide routers, cables, and other devices on the back of your desk. You can also hide a ton of stuff on the back of your monitor or use magnets to mount supplies wherever you need.
- Give everything its own home: Everything that is on your desk or in a drawer needs to have a home. It will stay there when you have your workspace cleaned. If something does not have its own home, it is going to just sit out and become clutter again. The breadbox test can help. If the item is smaller than a breadbox, it needs to be hidden away in a canister or drawer.
- Reboot your office every night: No matter how much you clean your workspace, you will probably make it at least a little bit messy during the day as you work. This is fine, as long as you clean up the mess when you are done. Before you head out the door each night, make sure that you clean off your desk. It should only take a few minutes, and then you will come into a clean desk each day. This can truly make you feel better about your workplace, which in turn, can make you feel more positively about your work in general.



Decluttering your workspace can make a big difference in how much you are able to get done during the day. It will help you know where every item is when you first look for it, to save you a lot of time, and it can help you keep your focus on the task rather than focusing on all of the clutter. It will also save you a lot of frustration.

HABIT NO. 14: SET A TIMER

The first tip that we are going to look at is setting a timer. This can help you in several ways. First, you can set your own deadlines for finishing individual tasks. Alternatively, you can decide that you will get as much done in twenty or thirty minutes as possible, and then take a break. This helps you avoid procrastination because you turn it into a race to complete your goals in time.



Let us say that you are working on a new presentation. You know from experience that this kind of work takes you around two hours to complete. Set the timer for two hours, and then start working. The timer will count down in front of you, so you know exactly how much time you have left. This can really help to keep your focus. Since you know that you only have two hours to get it done, you are less susceptible to distractions and less inclined to procrastinate.

You may not like deadlines, but they are going to spur you to take action right now. A timer is crucial to this process because it gives you a visual of the time you have left and the time that has passed. You need to place it somewhere that you can look at so that you can be mindful of that time. We are more likely to focus on the work that needs to be done, rather than wasting time procrastinating, because we become more aware of the time we allotted to the task is starting to run out.

The timer does make a big difference. You may know that you have two hours to get a task done, but you may not realize how much time is passing. The “two hours” are more of an idea than a concrete reality, in this instance. You will take breaks, talk to coworkers, do other things like check emails, and think you have plenty of time; but when you look at the clock and have half an hour to get two hours’ worth of work done you will regret the time that you wasted.

If you are someone who needs to take breaks in your work to keep you focused, you can split up the work into blocks. For instance, if the work is going to take you two hours, you could separate it into four 30-minute segments. After each 30 minute period is over, you can take a ten-minute break. You can get up and move around, get a drink or just clear your head. This can help you to not get too tired of working in one long segment of time, and you can still use the timer to keep you on track. You can adjust the timer to use a specific way, tailored to your mindset and personality.

Here are some tips to help you manage your time:

- Set reasonable deadlines. You cannot finish a task in an hour if it usually takes you two hours. Doing this will leave you frustrated and knowing you cannot succeed. Keep in mind that things often take longer than you might think and that some potential challenges may show up. So, if you work on a task that usually takes two hours, consider setting the time for 2.5 hours to give you this leeway if needed.
- Avoid deadlines that are too lenient. If you only need an hour to get something done, do not allow yourself two hours. This is too much

time and will lead you to miss out on the sense of urgency benefit of having a timer.

- You can create a reward or consequence system. If you meet the deadline that you set, you can come up with some type of reward, such as a piece of chocolate. However, if you do not make the deadline, you would deprive yourself of this reward.
- Work in smaller time chunks. You may find that it is difficult to work for two or three hours at a time on one project, even if that is how long the project will take. Break it up into smaller chunks. This allows the project to be that much more manageable. Set the timer for about an hour or less at a time and then take some small breaks in between. You will be amazed at what a difference this can make!

When choosing a timer to use, there are three options—Google, a phone app, or a kitchen timer. If you are able to put the timer on your phone and not get tempted to play on it, then those can be great resources for timers. Digital timers are good because you will not have to worry about how distracting the phone can be, and they are great to take with you wherever you need to work.

HABIT NO. 15: TURN OFF THE PHONE AND HIDE IT

A big culprit of your lack of focus is your phone. It can do so even if you do not answer it or look at the text when it rings, vibrates, chirps, or beeps. Researchers reported evidence of how the phone can distract you in a 2015 article in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*.



In this study, the researchers monitored the performance of 212 Florida State University undergraduate students. The students were divided into three groups—those who received calls, those who received texts, and those who did not receive any kind of phone notifications.

The findings were that cellular phone notifications alone could disrupt the performance of attention-demanding tasks, even if the participants did not interact directly with the mobile device when they heard it.

You have most likely experienced this at some point. It's not hard to understand how calls and texts that have nothing to do with the work you are doing can break your concentration. It is not just the act of stopping your work and reaching for the phone that can break your concentration; just hearing your phone, even if you don't answer it, is a distraction. The notifications are going to keep pulling at your attention and bugging you until you take a break and check them.

It is so important for you to turn off your phone when you are working, especially if it is something that needs a lot of your attention. You will find that it is easier to focus and you will be better set up to avoid other distractions as well. You will avoid seeing things that alert you about new text messages, new emails, and new voicemails, and you will not be stuck in the trap of checking social media either.

Turning your phone off—not silencing it but turning it completely off—can make a big difference. You will be more productive, stop making as many errors, and feel more relaxed in the process. You will also feel quite a bit happier because you will get more done during the same period and will have handled some attention-demanding work because you were not paying attention to the phone.

This will be difficult for some. You may need to take some extra steps to make sure that you do not use your phone when you need to get work done. Turn off your phone and put it in a drawer across the room or give it to someone else to hold until you are done with a big project.

There are also apps that you can use that will disable the internet on your phone for a few hours or more at a time. You can set how long it should be turned off to correspond with the work that you need to get done. You will not be able to get online with the phone, no matter what, until that time is over, so you are more likely to concentrate on the task at hand. If you need an app, consider working with Offtime, AppDetox, Moment, BreakFree, and Forest.

HABIT NO. 16: SAVE YOUR EMAILS FOR LATER IN THE DAY

Your email can cause just as many problems for you as any other distraction. Even if you are checking it to see if there are any important emails for work, it can end up being a big distraction. One of the problems with spending time checking your email is that it often seems harmless. You sign into your email account thinking it will only take a few minutes, but it always ends up taking longer. Your brain convinces you that it will just be a quick check, and so you log on and end up spending a ton of time there, much more than you had originally planned.



Another way that email distracts us is if you keep a browser tab open in your email program, which can be irresistible when a new message comes up. You may see on the tab that one or two new messages have arrived, and you want to take a moment to see who sent them and what they are. You may know that it is more important to stay on task, but you decide that it may be something that needs a response now. Therefore, you stop working and check your email. Most of the time, the issue is not that important, and

it may have even been spam. Nevertheless, you still stopped your concentration and stopped doing the work that needed to be done, and possibly for something of little to no value.

Another problem can come up when you leave your email open when you are trying to get work done. It can agitate the fear of missing out, also known as FOMO. This fear will prompt you to check your phone right away when a new text shows up. You do not want to miss any opportunity, whether to hear the newest gossip, enjoy a meme online, or engage with one of your friends. FOMO is a big reason a new email will draw your attention so much. However, when you succumb to the temptation of looking through your email, it will destroy any focus that you have.

It is best to avoid your email, if possible, at least for the majority of the day. You should never keep your email tab open when you are working, and do not give in to checking your email whenever the mood suits you. Moreover, do not check to see if you got a response to an email that you had sent out earlier in the day.

The best option is to check your email only two times during the day. Choose times that are going to work with your energy levels and your workflow productivity. Often, this means that you are not going to choose to open your email when you first get to work in the morning. This becomes a trap where you will spend a ton of time reading and responding to your messages, and you will not end up getting anything done. You do not want to waste those high energy morning hours on a task that is not that critical just to check a few emails.

Checking your emails right before you head to lunch is a good idea. You are probably getting low on energy at this time anyway. Moreover, you are more likely to rush through them because you will want to get out the door and go eat something, rather than reading them. You can do the same thing when it is time to leave for the evening. In this way, you can almost trick yourself into limiting your e-mail checkups to a certain amount of time. Catch up on all your correspondences right before you head out the door so that you do it quickly to get home to your family.

Now, depending on your personal energy levels, and the obligations that you have both at work and at home, you may have a different schedule for checking your emails. Follow these suggestions when determining the best time to check your email:

1. Review your own personal schedule: You can look at your schedule and determine when you absolutely must check your email. Make sure that you are honest and practical here. Remember that avoiding your email for only a few hours is not likely going to be the end of the world. If someone at work really needs you right away, they will walk over to your office if they do not hear back through email.
2. Choose two times during the day: After you check your personal energy levels, you will have a solid idea of how your energy will fluctuate during the day. You should choose two low-energy times during the day to check your email. These are times when you are not likely to get much done anyway, which makes them perfect for looking over any emails that you may have.
3. Tell others about the email policy: It is likely that family members, friends, co-workers, and your boss are going to have expectations in place regarding how long it takes you to respond to an email. You should let anyone important know that going forward, you will only check your emails two times a day. You can also inform them of the two times that you've selected. This encourages them to adjust their expectations and lets them know why you may not be responding to them right away, and communicating this can help both parties going forward.

Checking your email only two times a day is a great way for you to work with the maximum amount of focus. Moreover, it makes it easier for you to leverage those periods of the day when you naturally have a higher energy level.

You may find in the beginning that this policy is difficult to follow, especially if you are addicted to checking your email. You may need to give yourself some time to adjust to the changes. You may also need to consider giving yourself a routine reality check. Whenever you feel the temptation to

check your email when you should be doing some work, remember to ask yourself:

What is the worst that could happen if I avoid my email for just a few hours today?

It is likely that the worst-case scenario is not something that is likely to happen. Everyone will survive if you do not answer for a few hours, so turn off the email and keep your focus on the things that you need to concentrate on the most.

HABIT NO. 17: DON'T LET OTHERS DISTRACT YOU

No one is going to care as much about your time or focus than you do. No one else is going to hold any responsibility for it. It is up to you to figure out how to set others' expectations so you can get more done at work. As an adult, you certainly can't expect others to consider your work a priority, or "hold your hand" through your tasks.



If you want to avoid any traps of a reactive workflow, in which you are always catering to the impromptu demands of others, then you must start setting rules that concern your availability. In addition, you must also take the time to explain these new rules to those who are most likely to stop by and disrupt your work. Otherwise, you are making yourself vulnerable to interruptions, which can make it difficult to achieve the focus that you want.

The first step is to identify the most common circumstances that make it difficult to concentrate and interrupt your workflow. Some possibilities are:

- Coworkers who are always stopping by the office to ask for help on something or just to chat
- If you are at home, people may often drop by unannounced and then expect you to invite them in and entertain them for a couple of hours.
- Friends and family members who call you on the phone and expect that you will take those calls
- Coworkers who email you and then expect you to respond to them in an hour or less
- Friends who like to text you at all times of the day and still expect that you are going to respond back to them right away

It is likely the most burdensome expectations - those that have the biggest impact on your focus and productivity - are coming from just a few people in your life. With this in mind, the second step that you can do is make a list of the top five “offenders”. These people do the things in the list above on a regular basis and disrupt your focus.

Think about a coworker who always seems to drop by the office and wants to chat for a long time. Think of that family member who seems to get easily irritated if you do not return their emails and calls right away. Think of that friend who has to send you dozens of texts each day and then wants you to respond to each one right away. They might even react negatively if you choose to not respond within a certain window of time. Alternatively, think of that neighbor who often drops by unannounced, just because they know you are home, without realizing that you are working.

It is likely that you can count the worst offenders of this on just one hand. After you come up with this list, move on to the third step—brainstorm ideas to help reset their expectations. This certainly doesn’t have to be malicious in any way, but it should be done if you want to maintain a certain amount of focus.

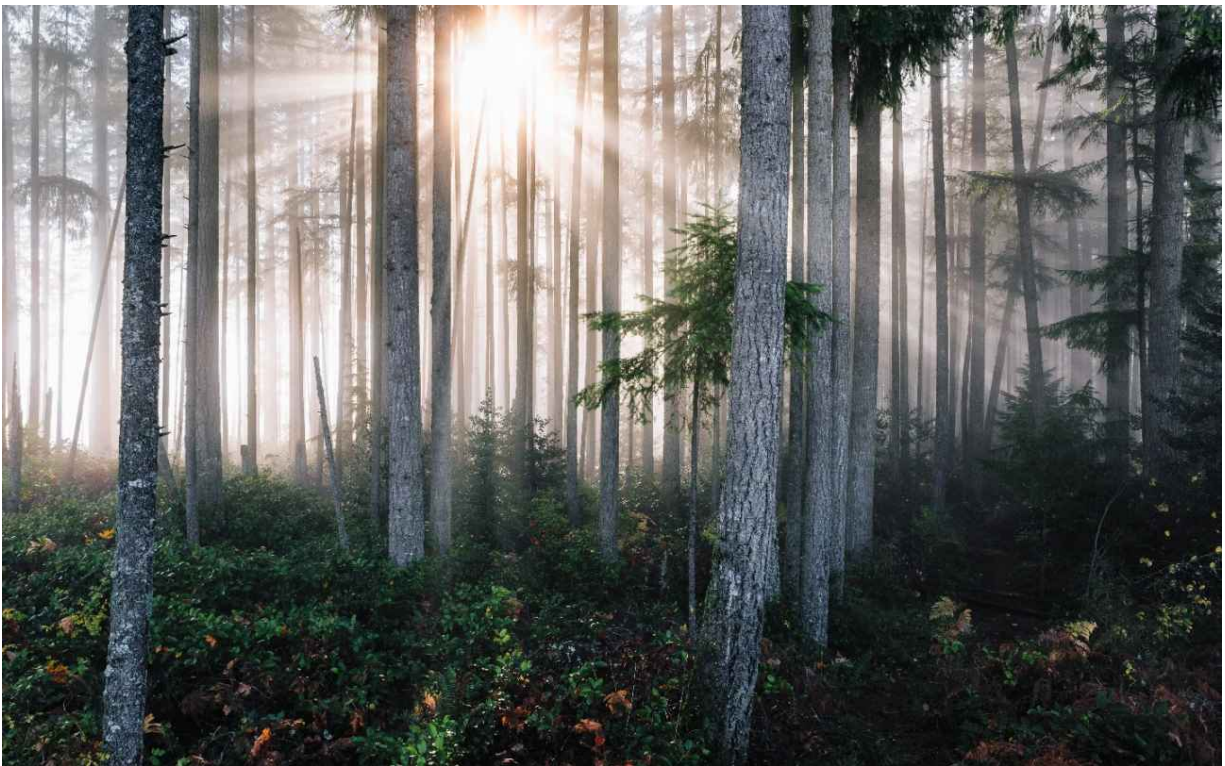
For instance, if you have a coworker who is stopping by often, you can tell them that you would love to chat, but you are too busy in the morning, assure them that you will be happy to talk with them after lunch.

Alternatively, you could close your door and the blinds and make it look like no one is there, which may stop any of the random coworkers who are trying to stop by. This is a great way to communicate non-verbally that it might not be the time to socialize.

Never be scared to reset the expectations of others. Remember, they are not going to do this on their own. Moreover, it is never a good idea to let your frustration build up so that you are upset and do not handle it well. This can end up being much worse than politely explaining that you are busy at a certain moment in time. You should approach your top offenders with diplomacy and civility, and then ask them to work in a way that is better for you. You may be surprised by how receptive they are to your feedback along the way, and it might even gain you respect in your workplace. If you do not ask them to make changes, they are not going to, and you will never get the work done.

HABIT NO. 18: FREE UP YOUR CALENDAR A FEW TIMES DURING THE DAY

If you are still finding it difficult to focus, you may be falling into the trap of filling up your calendar too much during the day. Many people think that the only way they can be productive and get work done is if every minute of every day has something planned, so they work to fill up their calendars. This can backfire in a tremendous way.



Filling up your calendar like this will have the opposite effect on your productivity. Sure, it sounds like a good idea and you may think you will get more done but focusing that much each day will eventually catch up with you.

The first issue is scheduling too much into your day. This may seem productive, but you will just stress your body out, and the more stress that you feel, the harder it is to get things done. It can actually end up taking a physical toll, in addition to the mental strain that will be caused.

Another problem is that you are not working with your energy levels when you go about filling up your calendar. You are assuming that you will have high amounts of energy throughout the day without any dips. However, everyone has highs and lows with their energy levels, and if you just fill up your calendar, you are going to end up harming yourself and making it difficult to focus.

It is important to pick a few key things during your day. This frees up some of the calendar so that you can concentrate better. If you are not constantly worried about how much time you have to get things done during the day, and if you are not worried about playing catch up if something takes some time, you can work more efficiently. You can also work knowing that you are not rushing through it so that a certain standard of work can be maintained.

When you look at your calendar and see that it is very full, especially around those times of low energy, then it is time to make some changes. You should see if there are a few things that you can cut out of your schedule. What are some things that you do not need to get done that day? What are some things that are just going to be time wasters? Is there a meeting that you could skip or cut short? Is a particular project really going to need that much time? You'd be surprised how much more productive your day can be with a few small schedule adjustments.

Just a few minutes of reviewing your schedule and making some changes can make a big difference. It can reduce your stress because you will not feel as stressed out for time. So, make sure that your calendar only has a few items on it each day (you can always add more if you have the time and energy), and see how much you get done.

CHAPTER 5: SELF-CARE FOR TURBO-CHARGED FOCUS

HABIT NO. 19: LEARN TO WORK WITH YOUR OWN ENERGY LEVELS

You have probably noticed that your energy levels fluctuate throughout the day. You have times when you are pretty productive and ready to take on a big workload, and then there are times when you drink five cups of coffee, and still cannot seem to concentrate. During a period of high energy, you are more likely to feel productive and focused. However, in a period of low energy, you are more prone to becoming distracted. The trick to making sure that you are as focused as possible is to identify when these periods are for you, and then organize your workflow so that you make the best use of this.



Keep in mind that this is going to be a bit different for everyone. Some people find that early in the morning is when they are able to get a ton done. They might have been “morning people” for a long time already. They can hurry through all their projects by lunchtime, but if anything happens in the afternoon, they are going to be worthless. Some people do better in the afternoons, and others do their best when working at night. You have to monitor your own energy levels to figure out what works best for you, and do not worry so much about what works for other people.

The first step that you should do is create a spreadsheet. Google Sheets is a good option because it is free, and you will be able to access the information from any device that you want. You can use the first column to designate the time of day, going in 15-minute increments. Start at the time that you wake up and then end at the time that you usually go to bed at night.

The next column needs to be labeled “Energy Level.” Here you are going to pay attention and record your levels of energy at different times of the day.

You should use values between one and five, with one be high energy and five being low energy.

The third column can be “Notes.” Here you are going to add in any details that you think may be relevant about the energy levels and why they fluctuate. For example, you may want to write down what you eat with each meal to see if there is a pattern that relates to your energy levels.

The second step is to start keeping track of how your energy levels do over the next few weeks. Two to three weeks is best to help you get a good picture. You should input the values between one and five into your spreadsheet at different times of the day, which does not have to be done every 15 minutes. Do it any time that you see a shift in your energy levels. Nevertheless, remember that the more you record, the better it will be when you want to determine your energy levels later on.

Some good times to report your energy is in the morning when you wake up, before and after each meal and snack, and near your bedtime. These are times your energy levels are most likely to change. However, if you notice there is a big change in your energy level at a different time, report it as well.

When you eat and record, you can write down if you have a heavy or light lunch. This can help you figure out whether your energy levels are being impacted not just by the time of day, but also by what you eat. This also helps you adjust accordingly so that you can know the relationship between your body and mind more intimately.

The third step of this process is going to occur after you have spent a few weeks tracking your energy. This is the time when you review your spreadsheet, look through each day, and see if there are any trends. You can start to note when your energy levels are high and when they are low. For some, energy levels may plummet mid-afternoon and then recover around suppertime. This can vary from person to person, so do not worry if your high energy and low energy times are different from others. This is natural, as everyone’s body is different.

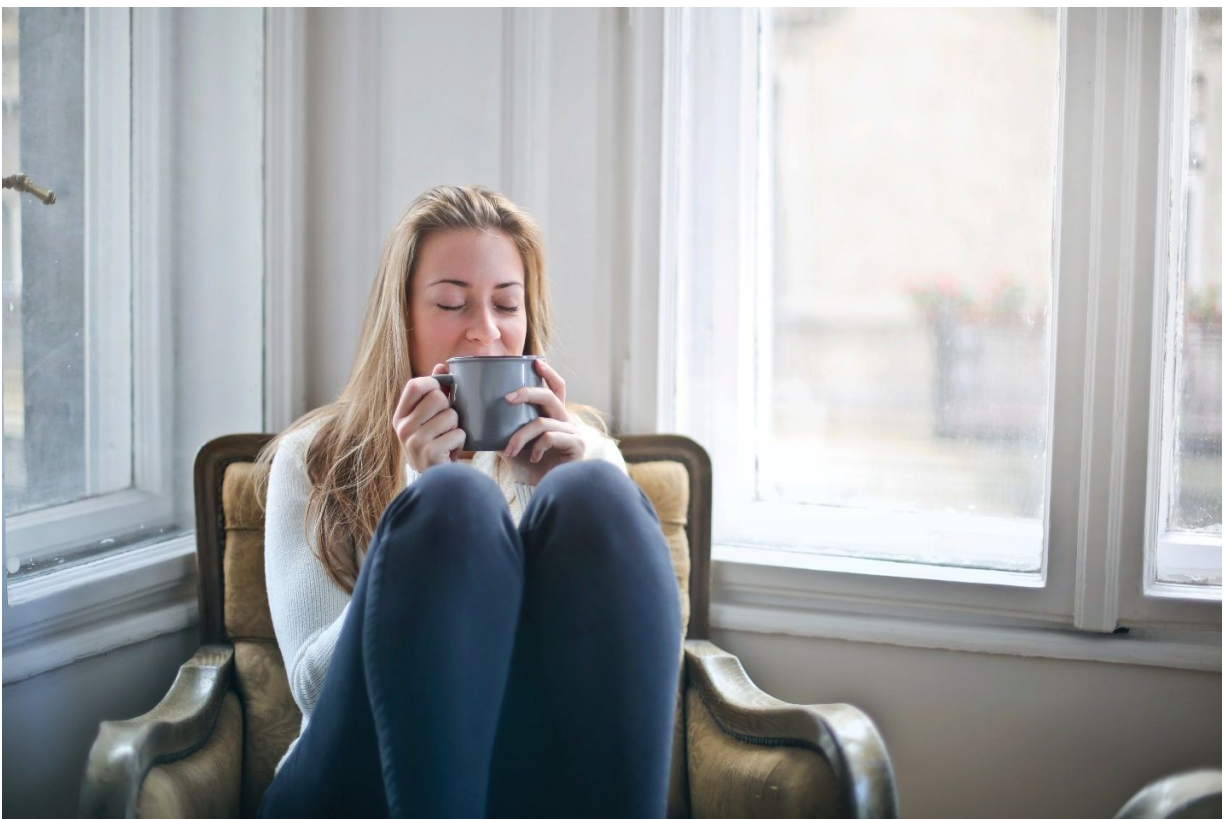
Once you figure out the low energy and high-energy times of day, you can learn how to adjust the workflow that you have to complement them. You can schedule your deep work or the type of work that requires a lot of focus from you during those high-energy periods. Then you can schedule your breaks and easier work, such as returning phone calls, scheduling meetings, and replying to emails, during times of lower energy.

You can also use this information to look for changes you can make to help you leverage your high-energy periods. For example, you may notice that larger meals were horrible for your energy level, which are going to impair your ability to concentrate, can make you tired, and can make it easier for you to become distracted.

Your energy levels—ups and downs—will vary from what someone else has. Some people are most energetic in the morning, but there are others who find that the late morning or even later at night is the best time for them to get things done. Your spreadsheet will help you figure out when these high energy levels are for you so you can make your schedule work for you.

HABIT NO. 20: MAKE SURE TO TAKE BREAKS

When you begin a long project, it is tempting to just sit down and try to get it all done at once. However, this makes it difficult to maintain your focus throughout. Taking some small breaks while you work can help keep you on task and focused. When you spend too much time working on a project, you may notice your brain start to drift, no matter how hard you try to focus, and you just end up wasting time. The brain is not designed to focus on something for hours without rest.



Working without taking breaks can lead to boredom, which can make you vulnerable to distractions, making it impossible to concentrate. Taking breaks gives your brain a breather so it can process new information, form new connections, and commit important information to memory. Breaks also allow you to come back to your work feeling refreshed, which makes it so much easier to manage your attention and keep those distractions away.

There are many reasons you may choose not to take a break, such as feeling guilty for not getting the work done, or worrying you are wasting time when you're not working. This can prove to be detrimental. You may also feel like you will get behind or in trouble if you stop working. The irony of this is that working without taking these breaks will result in the outcome that you are trying to avoid. Without rest, your mind will become less efficient, you will make mistakes, and you will be less productive, which results in you spending more time on a project than necessary.

When you choose to add breaks into your day, there are several ways to go about it. You can go with the one that seems to work best with your workflow, with how you get stuff done, or with the particular project that you are trying to finish.

- Go in time chunks: The Pomodoro Technique is a great option for most people. It schedules the breaks for you, regardless of whether you are losing focus or not. You work for 25 minutes and when that time is up, you take a five- to ten-minute break. After three of these in a row, you take a twenty-minute break. You can also break it down into different time limits. If you can concentrate well for an hour and then need a break, then set it up like that.
- Monitor your attention levels: You have to have a certain level of self-awareness when it comes to this one. When you start to feel that your focus is waning, it is time to take a break. You can get up and get a snack, drink some water, stretch, and walk around. You just need to do something to break up the work session and let your brain have a break. Of course, you should choose something to do during the break that won't lead to excessive distraction.
- Power naps are your friend: These power naps are short, usually between 10 to 30 minutes. A ten-minute nap gives you an opportunity to close your eyes and relax for a few minutes. You can organize your work into chunks of 45-minutes, and then take a ten-minute power nap between those times. It will not take long until you feel excited about these breaks, and it can do wonders for helping you concentrate.

- Socialize your breaks: You can make your breaks fun. If you like to be social, then this is a good option for you. Calling friends and loved ones for a few minutes can be a nice incentive for you to get your work done, and you will not be tempted to talk to them when you need to be working. Of course, if you end up speaking with the person for over the allotted time; it would defeat the purpose.
- Make the breaks into a game: Playing a game during your break can make the break a little more fun. You could play a game of solitaire with cards or a quick game app on your phone or computer—whatever you find enjoyable, yet not too challenging. It’s important to remember that the task should be a fun way to take a break, and not a time-consuming or stress-inducing game that could “suck you in” because ultimately, it’s about returning to your work.

These are just a few ideas to try, or you can come up with a method that works for you. The important thing to remember is that you must find a way to give yourself and your mind a break, rather than trying to work nonstop through the day. While this may seem counterintuitive, it will keep your mind focused and can actually help you get more done.

HABIT NO. 21: CONSIDER AEROBIC EXERCISE

Exercise is a great way to help increase the amount of focus that you have on the day. A ton of studies out there shows how great exercise can be for your whole body and mind. It can reduce your risk of Alzheimer's, improve your cognitive power, boost your memory, and help you to improve how well you manage your attention. This means that if you engage in aerobic exercise, it is much easier to focus when you are done.



The science behind this can be found in the hippocampus, the part of the brain that is responsible for helping you produce new memories. Neurologists have studied this and found that aerobic exercise is able to increase the amount of blood flow to the hippocampus. This can help to elevate how alert and focused you are so that you can devote more of your attentional resources to the task in front of you.

So, how are you able to use this information to your advantage? Before you have to study or sit down to get work done, make sure that you complete a

good exercise routine.

This does not mean that you need to go to the gym to get it done, and you do not even need to go on a long run either, unless you want to. Just sixty seconds of some energetic physical exertion will give you the same results and can help to increase that focus. Some ideas that you can try out include:

- Shadow box for a minute
- Jump rope for a minute
- Do a quick sprint outside
- Ten chair dips
- 20 jumping jacks
- Ten crunches
- Ten squats
- Ten pushups

The goal of these exercises, even though they are only for a minute, is to help elevate your heart rate. According to researchers, this helps increase how much red blood cells you have that are providing oxygen straight to your brain. It is only going to take you 60 seconds to do and can be great if you are doing your work in short time blocks. After 30 minutes of working, spend part of your ten-minute break doing some exercises and you will see better results. This is an extremely small investment to make both short-term and long-term for your focus and your mindset.

In addition to the research above, it has also been found that regular exercise is able to increase the volume of a protein that is responsible for helping the brain grow. The protein is called BDNF or brain-derived neurotrophic factor. It may be responsible for neuron growth and can help improve the synaptic transmission.

While this may sound very technical, it means that it helps your brain with information processions, attention management, and with better memory. Essentially, exercise helps you think better, in new ways, and more clearly.

If you are having trouble concentrating on the work in front of you, roll up your sleeves and do a quick burst of physical activity. It will only take a minute and can boost your focus like nothing else.

HABIT NO. 22: BRING YOUR FOCUS BACK WITH MEDITATION

It has long been known that meditation is a great way to improve your focus, help you stay on pace, and reclaim your sense of inner calm. It is a good tool to purge away the stress and distractions that you have that are burdening you and keeping you from being present in the moment.



Researchers have found that meditation can have many benefits when it comes to your attention. In 2007, a study was published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, about a group of 40 Chinese college students. The authors found that the time these students spent in meditation led to big improvements in how well they were able to concentrate.

Meditation does not have to be complicated, and it does not require you to sit with candles or burn incense. You do not need to mutter strange sayings or sit until your legs go numb to make it work. Many people have the wrong idea about how meditation works. Nevertheless, meditation works well for everyone, and you can even add some modifications that will make it work better for you.

Meditation comes in many different forms. Some of the forms are simple enough that you are able to complete them from anywhere, as long as you can get to a place where you get some peace and quiet. In addition, some of them can take you just minutes to complete. If you need a quick meditation session while you are at work to help you get back on track with your project, this can be incorporated into your lifestyle.

Mindful meditation is a good choice. This simple form involves you relaxing enough that you can focus your energy on breathing. You set a timer for just three to four minutes, and then close your eyes. During this time, you will take in slow and deep breaths. You need to concentrate, as much as possible, on each inhalation and exhalation, while trying to ignore all other thoughts.

You can do this anywhere you want, and, with the right circumstances, anytime you want. It even works if you are doing it at your desk during one of your breaks. Nevertheless, you can choose to do it anywhere, as long as you are in a place that is peaceful and quiet. You can choose to sit or stand, you can even keep your eyes open if you are able to concentrate while doing it, and you can personalize this to work the best for your needs.

You only need to do this for a few minutes to feel more refocused, refreshed, and relaxed than before. Try different types of meditation to see which one works the best for you.

In addition to doing these short little sessions of meditation at your desk or anywhere that you need to focus, you can start implementing regular meditation sessions into your day. There are many who have found great results with a ten-minute session before they get up for the day and another ten-minute session when they are ready to go to bed. This can often be enough to keep you calm, focused, and ready to take on the day. If you want

to set yourself up to have a great day every day, then a few minutes in meditation can make a big difference.

HABIT NO. 23: THE DANGERS OF DRINKING TOO MUCH CAFFEINE

Ok, some of you probably read this one and started freaking out. You worry that you will not be able to give up your daily cup of coffee and dread trying to get any work done without a little jolt to help you out. First, we need to look at the good news.



There are some benefits of consuming caffeine, as long as you do it in moderation. Studies show that caffeine in moderation can help increase your energy, improve your memory, and lift your mood. As long as you do not take in too much of it through the day, caffeine is able to elevate your mental alertness.

Caffeine poses a problem when you consume too much, as the consequences of doing so can be severe, including high blood pressure, increased stress levels, restlessness, and insomnia. Research also shows that

having an excess amount of caffeine consumption can lead to anxiety disorders. In fact, caffeine-induced anxiety disorder is now categorized in the DSM-5, or the Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (2013), that is considered the definitive text and principle authority for psychiatric disorders.

It is clear that the amount of the caffeine that you consume each day is going to have a direct influence on the ability you have to concentrate. Unfortunately, many people mistake being awake as being hyper-focused. We wrongly assume that as long as we stay awake, we are doing something right, and then we consume more caffeine than we really should.

Think back to a time when you took in too much caffeine and it made you feel jittery. You probably had a hard time concentrating. Clearly, being awake is not the same thing as being in a state of focus, at all.

The key here is to make sure that the amount of caffeine you consume is moderate. Health experts claim that this amount is near 400 milligrams. To give you a reference point, a 20-ounce cup of Starbucks “Pike Place” coffee has about 415 mg of caffeine.

If you are drinking a lot more than that, you are probably impairing, rather than helping your ability to concentrate. You may want to consider cutting back, which is not only going to help you to relax and sleep better, but it can also make it easier to manage your attention.

Remember, caffeine can come from a wide variety of sources, from coffee and soda to some foods like chocolate. Do not forget that many of those energy drinks have a ton of caffeine as well. You need to cut back your consumption of all of these if you want to get your focus back on track and start actively observing how much you are consuming, in order to take precautions.

Of course, unless your doctor has some reason for you to stop drinking caffeine completely, it is fine to drink some, as long as you do so in moderate levels. Moderate consumption has benefits but drinking too much will ruin all your work with focus.

If you are someone who drinks a ton of caffeine, in coffee or energy drinks or soda, you may need to cut back slowly. Doing too much too fast can leave you feeling sluggish and with headaches, which is not good for your focus either. Cutting back a little bit at a time helps you adjust. You want to cut back until you get down to the 400 milligrams that are suggested. It may take a while, but it can be amazing for your concentration.

HABIT NO. 24: EAT A HEALTHY DIET

The foods that you eat influence your focus. Those who eat a lot of food before doing work or a meal full of fast food or junk, find that they are just not able to concentrate when they are ready to work. The types of foods that you consume will make a big difference in how well you can concentrate on your tasks. As the saying goes, “You are what you eat”.



Eating a large meal—or one that is full of unhealthy foods like sugars or fried foods—is going to slow you down. It can make you feel overwhelmed because all your body wants to do is go to sleep rather than work. All the extra blood flow that you need to go to your brain in order to get work done is heading to your stomach to help with digestion. To make matters worse, the sugars and fast foods do not provide any type of nutritional value to your body, so you are not even fueling it up properly.

The best thing that you can do to ensure that you take care of your body and you do not hit a wall after you eat at work is to make sure you fill your

body with healthy nutrients. A light meal that has all the nutrients that you need can be a fantastic way for you to feel good and keep getting things done because your focus has not run off. If you want a big meal, save it for the end of the day, when you are not going to do any more work, but still, make sure it is full of healthy nutrients that the body needs.

Your body needs to get plenty of healthy nutrients in it to fuel your brain, give your muscles the help they need, and keep you fuller for longer so you do not end up getting distracted by hunger. We all know how it goes when you eat a breakfast or lunch full of sugars and bad foods. Not only are you tired afterward, it also does not take long until you are hungry again.

So, how do you make sure you eat healthily? Include these things to help improve your concentration:

- **Protein:** Make sure that your breakfast and lunch contain healthy portions of protein. A turkey sandwich can fit the bill so it does not have to be complicated. Having some leftover chicken breast or fish for lunch works nicely. Bacon and eggs in the morning would also be good. Protein can provide your body with many of the nutrients it needs to stay focused and keep you feeling fuller for longer. For those who are more inclined towards vegan or vegetarian options, consider tofu, quinoa, or other options.
- **Fruits and vegetables:** These can be nice for providing your body with the nutrients it needs for focus, filling you up, and even providing you with that little (healthy) sugar rush that you need if you are feeling lethargic come lunchtime. Try to fill up your plate (or whatever type of container you bring to work for lunch) with lots of healthy fruits and vegetables and see what a difference it can make.
- **Dairy products:** Have yogurt with your breakfast or bring one along as a snack when you get hungry, or you can bring some milk to drink along with your lunch. Dairy products can help to fill you up, and the vitamin D is fantastic for keeping your brain on task—not to mention the calcium is going to be great for your bones.
- **Carbs:** It is fine to bring some carbs along for lunch; you just need to be careful about what kinds you are consuming. Do not bring a big sandwich from the local fast food joint. Try to stay away from refined

and white sugars, like those that are in lots of snacks. Go for whole grain or whole wheat varieties, such as a little pasta or some bread with a sandwich. If you do bring a treat, keep it small, such as one cookie, and do not consume it during your high-energy time.

- Don't forget the snack: It is likely that when you spend so much time concentrating on getting work done, that you may be hungrier than normal. You may want to have a little snack around to help you out when this hunger strikes. Keep some granola, nuts, or even some yogurt or fruit nearby to help you take care of that hunger without feeling tempted to eat something that is not as healthy. This can certainly give you a little fuel throughout the day to help keep you going.

Filling your body up can make a big difference in how good you feel. It can help keep you focused and become your biggest ally against distractions, as long as you make sure that you are consuming the right types of foods. Keep these major food groups in mind, and you are sure to avoid that afternoon slump, at least a little bit.

HABIT NO. 25 : MAKE SURE THAT YOU GET ENOUGH SLEEP

Finally, you need to make sure that you are getting plenty of sleep if you want to be able to focus on the work that you must get done. Many Americans are just not getting enough sleep. They are too busy trying to keep up with everything that they need. By the time they get home from work, eat, take care of kids, and do other things around the house, it is late, and they still have things to finish up, only to get up early in the morning.



However, when you are not well rested, it is almost impossible for you to have any focus. You are too tired to focus, and distractions are going to be all around you. Setting up a good bedtime routine and making sure that you stick with it is critical to helping you see some results. None of the other tips in this guidebook are going to work that well if you are not getting enough sleep at night.

Follow these tips when you are ready to start getting more sleep:

- **Set up a bedtime routine:** Remember how we talked about the importance of a routine earlier on? A bedtime routine can be just as important when you are trying to fall asleep at night. This helps to prepare your brain for sleep so that you can fall asleep faster than ever before. You can make it as simple or as complex as you would like. For example, after you eat, you may choose to take a bath or shower, get dressed, and brush your teeth, moisturize, read a chapter or two from a book, listen to a podcast, and then head to bed. Personalize the bedtime routine so that it works for your needs.
- **Turn off the electronics an hour before:** It is tempting to spend the evening online, watching a movie, or playing on your phone or with some other electronics. However, this can affect how much sleep you can get. It is often recommended that for those who have trouble falling asleep at night, it is best to turn off those electronics at least an hour before you are ready to go to bed. Often times, you can end up staying up too late, absorbing some content that you might not even truly care about ultimately. You can spend that time talking to your family, reading a book, or doing something else that will help you wind down from the day.
- **Write down what you need to do the next day:** Instead of waiting until the next day, why not consider making a to-do list the night before. Some people cannot fall asleep because they are so worried about forgetting to do something the next day. All of these thoughts will tumble around in their heads, and it is almost impossible for them to fall asleep. Writing them down before you go to sleep can take away some of the worries so that you can actually fall asleep.
- **Keep your room cool:** Research has found that keeping your room cool can make a big difference in how well you sleep, and this has been confirmed by organizations such as The National Sleep Foundation. You do not have to keep it freezing but turning it down a few degrees may be the tip that you need to start sleeping better. You can always wear pajamas that are a little warmer and keep a blanket on you to help if needed.

- Turn off the lights: Do not leave lights on when it is time to go to bed. Light signals to the body that it is time to be up and moving and that is the opposite of what you want when it is time to get some sleep. Turn off all the lights, and even make sure that your phone or alarm clock does not emit too much light.
- Turn on some quiet music if needed. For some people, it is too difficult to fall asleep without any noise at all, which is why they choose to turn on the television or other noise to help them. However, the television is actually going to cause issues with how deeply you can sleep. If you are not able to sleep in complete silence, consider turning on some music to help; nature sounds or classical music can really do the trick.
- Have a set bedtime and wake time: Many people change up their schedules from the weekend compared to the weekday. They may stay up later and sleep in longer because they do not have anywhere they need to be. However, this can be hard on the body because it gets confused. Moreover, when you are confused and tired in the process, it is difficult to focus. Try setting up a bedtime and a wake time that you are able to follow every day of the week to ensure your body gets in a rhythm that can help with your focus.

CONCLUSION

Many people are looking for focus. They spend their time being distracted and end up scrambling, procrastinating, and rushing to meet a certain deadline that they could have easily met if they had efficiently broken up the work into manageable chunks and taken the right steps to ensure that their workflow was streamlined. Of course, more often than not, this is not what they want. They certainly intended to complete their work in an efficient manner, but the circumstances, whether it is their workplace, office, friends, diet, sleep pattern, or countless other factors, have all contributed to preventing this from happening.



Focus can truly change your life. It can lead you to thinking differently, documenting your thoughts better, having more energy throughout the day, completing more work in less time, seeing things from a different perspective, more confidence, less clutter, and stronger relationships. It is astounding to think that adjusting this one metric in your life can lead to so many positive outcomes. That's why this book can truly transform the way that you approach your work and life in general.

The truth is that without focus, many of us would be lost. There is more content and data produced than ever before in human civilization, and it is

easy to get lost and distracted from all of the content around us, rather than focus on what needs to be done. It doesn't matter whether the distraction is a YouTube video, a text, a tweet, a shout, a nosy neighbor, or a co-worker: they exist, and they are constant. Our professional lives depend on our ability to spend our mental energy properly, our tolerance to mental fatigue, and the feeling of being equipped to cope.

These 25 tips should help to ensure that you get your work done efficiently and productively. Of course, this requires effort and discipline on your part. You might realize that distractions are bad, that the right diet is essential, and that the correct sleep patterns can prove productive – but none of it truly means anything unless you have the willpower to truly implement these changes and communicate to those around you that you have certain boundaries that should not be tampered with.

The important thing to remember is that these steps don't necessarily have to be difficult and that your habits might not change overnight. It certainly isn't insanely hard to create a checklist or to manage one task at a time instead of multi-tasking or avoiding meetings that probably had no real purpose anyway. However, these small changes can truly work wonders.

It's also important to remember to customize and personalize these tips to your own life. Everyone has their own body, mind, and willpower, and it should be important to recognize your own limits and weaknesses. For some, limiting certain alerts is a realistic goal, while for others, it might not really work that way with their particular occupation, or life. Similarly, there are all sorts of different workplace dynamics, with regards to meetings and social conversations. You might not enjoy music in the background, and you might not enjoy making to-do lists. Every tip might work for your own particular life, but there is no doubt that overall, many of these can be positively incorporated for great results.

It's important to have some level of self-awareness in order to truly improve your focus. That's why understanding your personal triggers, monitoring your energy levels, understanding how food and sleep affects your body, can all truly contribute to the way that you absorb information, and how you personally approach your goals and tasks. There are certain methods

that work for some people that will not work for others, and rather than remain stubborn and stand by a process that clearly isn't working, it's important for you to adjust accordingly and understand when a certain method just "isn't for you".

Life requires focus. It demands it in both of our personal and professional lives. It's easy to see how a stressful work life can end up affecting the way that you interact with your friends and family negatively, which ultimately can affect your quality of life. Focus can lead to all sorts of amazing things: you can get more work done in less time, advance professionally in ways that you didn't think were possible, and enjoy a work-life balance that you never experienced before. Hopefully, this book can help you lead a more focused and productive life, in every way possible.

THANKS FOR READING!

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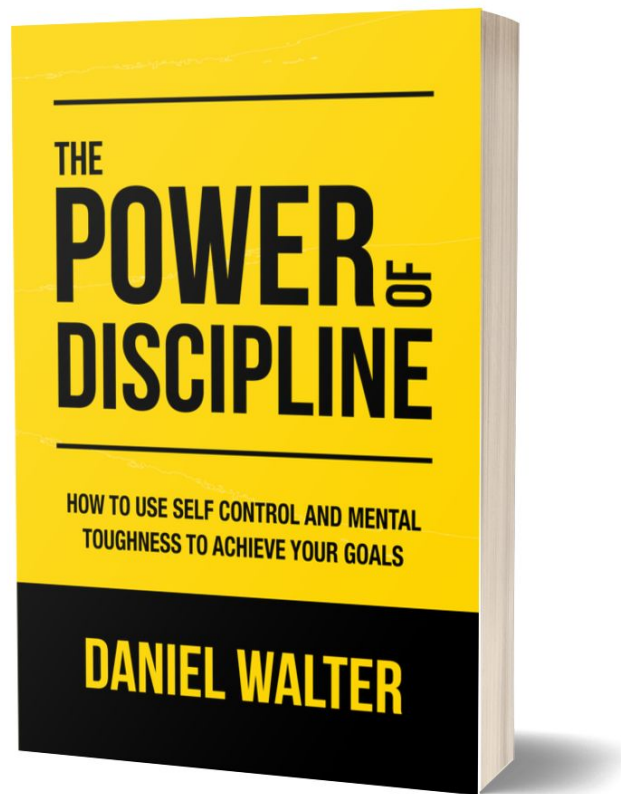
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