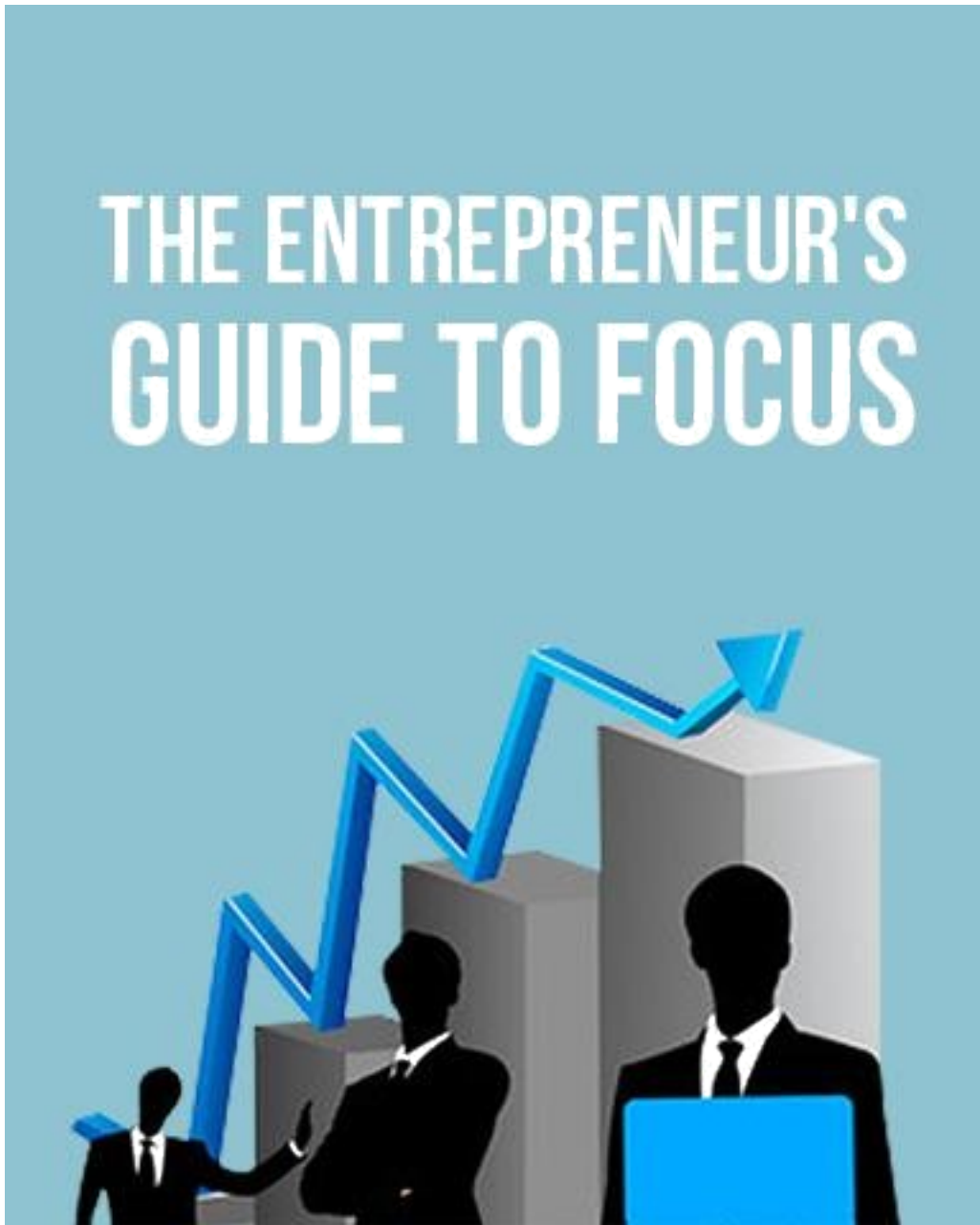


THE ENTREPRENEUR'S GUIDE TO FOCUS



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Introduction

One of the greatest challenges of the modern world is to be able to focus. It's undoubtedly a world full of distractions, which may prevent you from starting a productive day, staying healthy and fit when the temptation of fast food treats and inactivity beckons, or enjoying the calm and quiet in the midst of a chaotic world.

Being able to focus will give you peace of mind, as you take on the world at your own pace.

Once you learn to focus, you will value the smaller things in life. This means that you will become more effective in handling things that life offers you. You will only spend time on things that matters, controlling wasted time on things that have only caused economic, societal, and individual problems.

You will learn more about focus, identifying things that matters, and valuing simplicity in order to improve your life. By focusing on small things first, you'll be surprised to learn that you're doing a lot for your life. Changing things for the better all starts with baby steps, from quitting smoking and eating healthy to being productive and being courageous in reaching for your goals. You need to take on one change at a time, focus on it, and achieve it.

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Chapter 1: The Importance of Stepping Back

Distractions of All Kinds

It is the Age of Information, but it can be easily called as the Age of Distraction too.

Although the human world has always been full of activity and distractions, they have never been as incessant as they are now. Aside from busy phones, people have to contend with email and social media notifications, open browser tabs, and beeping mobile phones. Even if access to information is beneficial, it also means dividing your attention among several things, forcing you to multitask to deal with everything.

At work, with all the emails flooding in, requiring immediate response, the desk on the phone ringing nonstop from clients and partners alike, the reading materials from gadgets and paper sources.

When you get home, you'll have to scan through 500 channels on TV, with 500,000 million ads screaming for your attention. The computer is on, where additional work is waiting, social networks are busy with notifications, people are texting or calling, and kids or partners are seeking your attention.

Although it's a good thing that the Internet is growing and that everyone seems connected, everyone seems to be running out of free time too fast.

Engaging in online activities seems to have become addictive because of the instant positive feedback that it brings. It makes you feel good to receive an email, get Facebook likes, or see retweets. But these things only end up eating a lot of your time.

Being connected also seems to be naturally growing as a part of a lifestyle. You have to be connected anytime, anywhere, at home, in the car, at work, and on the train. But everyone needs to control this new sense of connection to avoid excessive distractions.

And when you do decide to disconnect, the society might not allow it. Yes, some people might applaud you for doing something different, but more people will likely feel indignant or offended, thinking that you've become too arrogant or that you don't like what they're doing for staying connected.

To test your tendency to be distracted, how many times did you stop reading this portion of the book to do other things? to check an email? to give in to a visual or audio distraction? to talk to other people?

In a world free of distractions, you would have answered "zero" to all these questions, but the real world really is full of distractions of all kinds.

Why Seek Focus

If you're pursuing life as a creative person, such as an artist, designer, writer, musician, photographer, and similar professions, you need the power to focus.

Distractions can ruin creativity in a snap. You can't create anything if you keep replying to emails, posting on Facebook, or reading a blog.

And even when you can switch between tasks, will you be able to do something effective? It will surely waste your creative time and attention, hence ruining your creative process.

All the time spent on communicating with other people or entertaining other distractions is time spent away from your creative process. Being connected does help in encouraging your creative power, as you learn new ideas from other people and listen to their feedback, but you need to spend time on creating and creating alone.

You can do that by making time for each process – for communicating and for creating. When you separate these processes, you can focus each time on a specific process. Your time for creating will be spent actually creating something, making you more productive. Separate your interests and savor the time spent for each one of them.

Aside from spending time for your creating process, you also need free time for the sake of your happiness, stress levels, and peace of mind. It's important that you be completely disconnected and experience real

solitude. You can nap, write, run, read, listen, watch, or engage in quiet conversation with loved ones.

Benefits of Disconnection

You can do a lot of things when you're disconnected. It will allow you to enjoy the following things:

- It will give you the chance to focus on your creating process.
- It will help you regain your focus on work and on other important things in life.
- It will reconnect you with people without any distractions.
- It will help you rest from the distractions of email, Facebook, Twitter, news, blog, IM, and more.
- It will increase your productivity and your sense of satisfaction.
- It will allow you to read books.
- It will help you de-stress.
- It will give you peace of mind.
- It will give you time to reflect on life.

These are only a few of the things that you can achieve when you disconnect. So, how do you do it?

- Unplug everything. Unplug your router, or disable your Internet connection.

- Follow a scheduled disconnection time daily. Set it at a certain time, for one to two hours minimum, and tell people about those times.
- Find a place without an Internet connection. You could go to coffee shops or public libraries without a wireless connection.
- Go outside. Run, jog or walk without a phone and enjoy nature better with your partner, child or friend.
- Shut off mobile devices. Do this when you drive or when you meet with someone to avoid interruptions.
- Activate blocking software. This will help you avoid distractions from the Internet, so you can't always access Twitter, Facebook, blogs, or other sites.
- Connect and disconnect in intervals. Disconnect for 45 minutes, connect for 15, and such. You can connect to the Internet as a reward for focusing on what you're doing.
- Don't bring your work home. Once you have logged out of work, make sure to focus on matters outside of work. Focus on yourself or your family instead.

The unfortunate thing is that staying connected seems to have become an addiction. But you can beat that using these tips:

- Determine your triggers. List these things down.
- Look for positive habits that can replace the old ones that served as triggers. If you quit smoking, you can take up running instead.
- Change the triggers, one at a time. Instead of opening your browser in the morning, you can get to writing right away.

- Find positive feedback for all the good habits you've practiced. This should motivate you to pursue more positive changes.
- Find negative feedback for all your negative habits. Tell someone about failing to make the change and get negative feedback to discourage you from doing it again.
- Focus more on the positive feedback to reinforce your good habits.

How to Reinforce Focus

Aside from making a habit out of disconnecting, you need to learn about focus rituals. These refer to a series of actions that you need to do habitually until you feel physically compelled to do them. They become special actions that you need to do.

So when you have to follow a ritual, you can focus better and become more creative. Some of the rituals that you can try include the following:

- Spend your mornings quietly. Wake up before the other household members. Don't turn on the computer and don't go online. Enjoy your breakfast and morning newspaper. Run around the block or meditate. Do nothing. Focus.
- Prepare a to-do list. Start with the three biggest tasks of the day, or the one major thing that you want to finish before the day ends. This should you focus on the things that matter.
- Learn to refocus. During the course of the day, you might get distracted. So refocus on the important tasks at hand every two hours

or so. Close your browser, go for a walk, and clear your head, then look at your to-do list again.

- Focus, then rest. Do this alternating exercise to make sure that you stay focused. Focus for 10 minutes, rest for 2; focus for another 25, then rest for 5, and so on.
- Focus on two things. You can do this when you have two major tasks at hand, but don't make the switch rapidly. Focus on the first task for 10 minutes, then the next 10 on the next project, or focus on one until you lose interest in it before switching to the other.
- Connect, then focus. Set a certain time to check your email or go social, then disconnect to focus on your creative projects. Reconnect for another period of time, then focus. Repeat this cycle.
- End your day right. Enjoy your evening by disconnecting.
- Perform weekly focus rituals. Review your week, look at your projects, edit your to-do list, change your focus rituals to include only those that work, and review the rest of your professional and domestic life to see what needs changing.

Chapter 2: How to Avoid Distractions

Controlling the Sources of Distractions

There are more sources of distractions these days with the availability of the Internet. Decades ago, people were only distracted by the phone, memos, fax machine, solitaire, and co-workers. Now, people have to deal with emails, IM, blogs, online forums, social networks, news sites, mobile devices, Skype, online games, online TV, eBooks, online music, videos, apps, and more.

So, how you can control the flow of these distractions?

For one, you need to be conscious about how much time you spend online. Choose what you want to do carefully and focus on the most important information and communications.

Start fresh. Disconnect now.

It also helps to admit to yourself that you can't consume all the information there is. There's just too much information, too many people to communicate with, and too many tasks to finish. Once you acknowledge

this, you have to choose on what you read and how to communicate and let go of the rest.

You may also want to consider going on an information cleanse by not checking your email, social networks, IMs, and favorite websites, not watching TV, avoiding your phones except to answer important calls, going online only to do the necessary research. Instead, you spend your time reading books and articles that you've shelved for a long time or watching thought-provoking movies.

Doing this cleanse will help you clearly see that you can live without being online all the time. So now, you need to choose the most important channels of communication. It could be email, cell phone, or Skype. Find out the most important news sites and blogs to visit for updates. Choose the right music, movies, and TV shows. Eliminate the things that you don't need one a time per day. This will help reduce your distractions.

Limit the time spent on even the online communications that you consider essential. It could be 30 minutes in your inbox, 30 minutes on your favorite blogs, or one hour of TV. List these priorities down and follow them to the T each day, until it becomes a habit.

Choose Your Responses

It seems like it has become a habit to always respond to emails, social network messages, blog comments, posts, and forum posts. However, this only makes you prone to distractions.

But why do people feel that urgency to respond to things right away? It's mainly because of fear that people might think you're slacking on your job, fear that customers might abandon you, fear that people will see you as rude for ignoring their messages.

So how can you get rid of these fears?

- Imagine yourself without those fears. You prioritize who you will respond to and do so not out of fear, but because your reply is important. This will significantly reduce the stress out of the need to send replies to everyone as fast as you can.
- Face those fears. Determine those fears and deal with them by disconnecting for a few hours. Then see what happens, how people reacted, and whether your fears are true or not.
- Wean yourself. Now that you know how your fears and the urgency to respond are ruining your life, free few hours of your day every day by not responding. Gain more control over when to give a response.

Break Free from Keeping Up With Information

As discussed earlier, the need to get the latest information or check the latest messages stems from fear.

If you're scared of looking ignorant, think about how many people will ask you about current events or laugh at you for not being updated. Instead, focus on the important things that really matter to you.

If you don't want to miss an opportunity, then control your need to stay up to date and spend your time on pursuing real opportunities instead.

If you're worried that you won't know the bad things that are about to happen if you ignore messages, you will still know anyway. Family and friends will still tell you about an approaching storm, a possible economic collapse, or any significant event that might affect you.

If you are concerned you might experience something bad for not being informed, the opposite might happen. You can spend your free time being creative. If you're really worried, read the headlines of your favorite news sites, then tune out for two days before checking these sites again. Repeat this until such time when you can spend more days being tuned out and see if something bad happens. You will then break free from the urgency of staying updated and enjoy your life more.

Controlling Your Time with Your Inbox

It's a common habit to leave your inbox open most of the time, at home or at work. However, doing so will keep you distracted since every time a new

email comes, you'll stop what you are doing to check it and even respond to it.

To avoid spending excessive time in your inbox, follow these tips:

- Make a to-do list out of the inbox. Read your emails and list down all the tasks you find in them. Do it on a notebook, Notepad, or programs such as Taskpaper.
- Open emails only at scheduled times. Find the most convenient time for you to stay available through email. You could check your inbox 5 minutes every hour, or twice a day.
- Work without opening your email. Do this to all the other online communications and distractions too. Don't even leave your browser open to avoid the temptation to surf online.
- Prioritize your tasks. After disconnecting from your inbox, choose what's important.

Healthy Distractions

When think distractions, you might consider them all negatives. However, distractions are also good because of the following reasons:

- They can give you a break. Distractions can relieve stress from your mind and let you relax.
- They can help you forget certain problems, pushing them in the back of your minds.

- They can inspire you, especially if you are distracted by reading articles and books, possibly giving you new ideas or a source of motivation.
- They can be fun and may even let you find new things to enjoy.
- They can help you refocus.

So how can you let healthy distractions into your life?

- Spare a few hours of your day to focus on important things. Avoid communicating online.
- Follow intervals for work. Spend 40 minutes on work and 20 minutes for healthy distractions.
- Set disconnect time for hours every day.

Find more ways to balance your life between focus and healthy distractions. Consider your personality and needs as well.

Why It's Hard to Avoid Distractions

While you may be set on letting go of all your distractions, it's not all that easy. The difficulties stem from the following things:

- You are addicted to distractions. You are compelled to know everything and get in touch with everyone. But you can overcome your addiction one trigger at a time, so you can control each one better.

Think about how cravings and urges will go away. Endure them, then try to replace them with a good habit.

- Answer your emotional need. Since you can no longer do the distractions that fill your emotional need, such as the need to be entertained by reading blogs or to be satisfied when you see social network messages, likes or retweets, find other ways to fill the void. Instead of recognition from your distractions, seek real recognition. Avoid feeling bored. Pursue a real passion instead of playing online games.
- Address your fears. Be honest what those fears are and confront them. Try to see just how real those fears are by doing a test, by letting go of your distractions for real. You will likely see there's no ground for your fears.
- Deal with your desires. Find out what those desires are. If you dream of blogging or tweeting while building followers. If you are determined to reach these goals, then devote your time to doing such things online. But if you're not really aiming for these things, then you better spend your time on more important things. If your desire requires that you deal with the online distractions, just make sure to constantly remind yourself what you need to do and what you have to avoid

Chapter 3: How to Simplify Everything

Clearing the Clutter

Imagine working on a cluttered desk, in an untidy room, while fielding busy phones, social network and email notifications popping up, someone contacting you on IM, and other people calling your attention. Would you still be able to effectively get on with work?

You might not, amidst all this clutter. That's why you need to clear your desk, your desktop wall without any icons, and minimal decorations on the walls. It helps to listen to ambient music to drown out distractions.

You can get started by making small steps, such as the following:

- Tidy up your desk. Choose only five of the most important items to be placed on your desk. It could be your computer, a photo frame, water bottle, and paperwork. Wipe your desk free of dust. Put the other items away or on the floor. Sort through the papers on the desk and file them later.
- Deactivate computer notifications. Familiarize yourself with the settings of your email, IM, mobile device, social networks, and calendar to turn off notifications that might interrupt your work. Unplug your phone or use the Do Not Disturb Mode to focus.

- Listen to soothing music and use headphones. Buy a CD or go to iTunes to build your collection of relaxing music that will put you in a peaceful mood. Headphones will also drown the surrounding noise.
- Don't put too many icons on your desktop. Remove all application shortcuts and use a launcher program instead that will only require you to type the name of the program, folder or file that you want to open after a few keystroke combinations. Store all your files into My Documents and hide the rest of the icons.
- Declutter your walls and floors. Sort through all the things on the floor and keep those things that you need out of sight. Do the same thing to your walls, while keeping only valued family photos or artwork on them.

Do these things one small step at a time and you'll eventually see a major change.

Take It Slow

Living a past-faced life seems to be everyone's game. It's common for people to multitask and switch between tasks. But doing this might be counterproductive.

If you want to create great things, you need to slow down. Rushing everything will only make more room for errors. Move slow and accomplish the right things.

Slowing down will also benefit you by being able to focus better and deeper, which will lead you to appreciate things, time, and people. When you learn to appreciate, you'll know how to enjoy life. All in all, life will be less stressful and more peaceful.

The first step towards slowing down is to change your mindset. You have to understand and get a taste of what it feels like to live life slowly and to savor every moment. Admit to yourself just how much better life gets if you learn to take it slow.

To pursue life slowly, you need to do these things:

- Reduce your to-do list to the most essential tasks, about one to three of them. Do them first before doing routine tasks.
- Schedule fewer meetings and focus longer amounts of time on the important things instead of being shuttled from one meeting to the next.
- Disconnect at times. Start disconnecting for short periods of time, until you can do it for a day and indulge in your creativity.
- Practice not rushing to get to appointments. Give yourself enough time to prepare for and travel to appointments instead of cramming things to your schedule.
- Savor being lazy at times. Feel comfortable and enjoy doing nothing, until you get used to it.
- Know that failing to get things done is alright. You don't have to be frustrated and disappointed every time you have unfinished business.
- Get rid of the fluff. Eliminate, automate or delegate them to others.

- Be conscious of what you do, who you meet, what your surroundings look like, and more.
- Don't overcommit. Choose four to five essential commitments and let go of the rest.

You will feel happier and more satisfied if you don't rush everything in life.

Go with the Flow

No matter how much you plan your life, there are things that are simply out of your control. But don't get angry or disappointed because it will only stress you out and ruin your day. Instead, learn to embrace these things and go with the flow. Then, focus on your dynamic environment. It helps to do these things:

- Admit that you can't do everything.
- Be conscious to warrant change.
- Take a deep breath every time you feel frustrated, angry or stressed.
- Get perspective to learn to let go of things that you can't control.
- Practice going with the flow, until you excel at it.
- Laugh it off, even if it doesn't seem funny.
- Know that you can't control other people.
- Acknowledge imperfection and change.
- See life as a dynamic machine.

Life is ever changing. Don't fight it.

Doing Things Effortlessly

To achieve the power of focus, you need to learn how to do things effortlessly. It's not always right to address your difficulties at work by giving into your distractions just to avoid dealing with the former.

Instead, flow like the water, effortless in its movement. It follows gravity and the contours of the landscape that it passes through. It doesn't force things, yet it's powerful and graceful.

Learn how to be effortless by keeping these tips in mind:

- Do something out of passion.
- When you're about to do something you don't like change course and find something that you do like, while still getting to the same destination.
- Don't force your control over uncontrollable things.
- Feel the moment.
- Keep an eye open to all the possibilities, consider them all instead of fearing all the choices, and follow your intuition.
- Be flexible.
- Find the sweet spot to maximize effectiveness and minimize effort.
- Do less and do them with less effort.
- Confront the difficult and deal with the easy things now.

Sorting Through Priorities

For many people, it's hard to find focus because there are too many things that they are trying to accomplish all at once. That's why you need to learn to prioritize things.

Start with reducing your tasks. Choose the 5 most important tasks in your to-do list and deal with them first. Devote a block of your day to doing the rest of the routine tasks.

Among the most essential tasks, start with the one that excites you the most and the one that will have the biggest impact on your life.

Settle with a single task at a time. Eliminate all distractions. Start working on it for a whole of 10 minutes. Take a break, then focus on it for 10 minutes or longer, until you get the momentum of things.

Breaking Free from Goals

When you eliminate less important tasks, this also means that you have to let go of certain goals. You need to do that due to the following reasons:

- They are forcing you to work, not because you love it, but because you need to follow your goals.

- They might constrain and stop you from achieving other things outside of your goals.
- They might pressure to get all your goals done.
- They might discourage you if you fail to get them done.
- They might stop you from living the moment, as you keep looking forward to the future.

Instead of ticking off goals one by one from your list, you can do things that excite you. You can live in the present without worrying about where you'll be a few months or years from now. You can have the luxury of doing what's natural, not what's forced upon you by your goals. And the biggest benefit of breaking free from the need to always set goals is to focus on the present and savor it. Simplify your life by clearing the clutter, taking it slow, going with the flow, doing things effortlessly, prioritizing things, and letting go of your goals.

Chapter 4: How to Will Yourself to Focus

Pursuing Single Tasks and Improving Productivity

Multi-tasking is often associated with being productive, but now it has become a way of life. It's not really a productive way of working. For one, it makes you inefficient for having to switch between tasks. It can complicate things, as you suffer from stress and commit errors. It can also make you insane as you deal with the chaos of multi-tasking, when your brain is designed only to handle one thing.

That's why it's best to settle with single tasks. Your mind will be focused on one thing and one thing alone. Imagine how joyful it would be to savor one task, such as reading a novel, eating breakfast, or spending time with your family.

This will also benefit you in that you can focus better, improve your effectiveness, develop your expertise in what you do, and produce quality work. It also feels good to lose yourself in something that you feel is worth doing.

You can lead a life full of single tasks by doing these things:

- Be aware of the things that you are doing, right from when you start doing it. Stop yourself from switching to another thing.

- Eliminate distractions. If you're going to research, focus on it alone. If you're going to read a book, do nothing except read the book.
- Choose your tasks wisely. Always ask yourself "Am I doing something worthwhile?" If not, proceed with the important tasks.
- Pour your everything into the task at hand. If you're going to talk with friends, talk and listen. If you're going to lose weight, eat healthy and exercise as much as you can.
- Practice. Once you get your drive going, practice it every single day until you're good at it.

But how can you boost your productivity if you choose single tasks?

- Choose only the biggest and most important tasks every day, the ones that you really need to finish to create an impact on your work and life in general.
- Don't go straight to your distractions first thing in the morning. Instead, prepare a to-do list.
- Get rid of distractions.
- Finish your tasks one by one.
- Stop yourself when you feel the temptation to check your inbox or log into your social network accounts.
- Don't stop doing the most important tasks until they're done.
- Take note of things that you can't do now or think of doing later so you won't forget them.
- Take a break and de-stress by breathing deeply in and out.

Benefits of Smaller Work Focus

Granted that you now know a bit about how to focus, you still have a lot of work to do. For starters, you need to narrow down your focus.

It's not right to work with a broad focus. This could be overcommitting to too many projects at once, trying to please all of your customers, doing everything for everybody, being available for contact all the time in both online and offline channels, and more.

Instead, you need to narrow your focus by identifying your priorities. Let go of one unnecessary task at a time. Do less. Include fewer features. Learn to say no to some people's requests. Accept that you can't please everybody. Focus on fewer things, things that do matter.

How to Focus on Reading and Research

You can do more work, especially with work that involves a lot of reading and research, if you know how to avoid distractions when you're reading. So, how can you focus on long blogs or articles?

To finish long reading materials without being interrupted frequently, put your reading material in a separate window without any other tabs open. Expand that window to cover the rest of the screen and show the blog or article on your computer screen alone. Don't switch to other windows or programs until you're done reading.

Do the same thing with books. Hold your book and put your computer, laptop or any other mobile device out of your sight. Read in a quiet place and enjoy the experience.

When you do research, don't open your emails, social networks, and irrelevant windows, tabs or programs. Search about the topic that you're interested in and open the web pages that you found. Skim these pages and open the relevant links. Repeat these with the new online sources. Open all the necessary articles then read them one by one. Take notes after reading each article and bookmark some. This will help you focus when you do research, despite being online.

Benefits of Walking on Disconnection and Focus

Did you know that you can boost your productivity immensely by walking, aside from staying healthy and slim?

You can follow this walking routine to help you regain your focus:

- Walk for about 30 minutes to a destination – a library, park, coffee shop, or café. Don't connect online.
- Read or work for 40 minutes, from writing and reading to taking notes or responding to emails. You can insert some snacking in there too.
- Repeat this schedule.

Walking and disconnecting are worth trying because you can refocus and can think better after sitting all day long. It will also help you clear your head, enjoy what nature has to offer, and take a break from stress. It will even help you improve physically. After walking, you'll know how to focus on work again and waste less time on distractions.

Chapter 5: How People with Various Roles Can Focus

How Parents Can Find Focus

A parent's life is never quiet! You have kids demanding, screaming, squealing, crying, and playing at home, so it's even more difficult for parents to find focus and peace of mind.

One way to get focus to work for your life as parents is to separate your roles. Assign them to different days or weeks and focus on each role one at a time. For instance, you have to wake up early in the morning before the kids wake up and focus on yourself. Run, jog, walk, read a book, do yoga, or indulge in your creative side by drawing or writing.

Once the kids wake up, prepare them for school while you prepare for work, pack lunches, and more. But this time, focus on being a parent and give time to talk to your kids.

Before the morning ends, go to work and focus on work alone.

In the afternoon, you can finish all household duties, or finish work, depending on which is more important.

In early evening, focus on yourself once more while your kids finish homework.

In the late evening, tuck your kids in bed. Read to the young ones, if you can.

These are only a few examples of what parents can do to focus. Learn to schedule things so you won't get off track. However, be flexible enough to accommodate last minute changes. Deal with these surprises and interruptions instead of stressing over them.

Parents with babies and toddlers might struggle even more because these young children are more demanding. The best thing that you can do is to share the work between both parents. When one is watching the child, the other one should take a break. During your break, take your time to go for a walk, read, exercise, and engage in your hobbies.

It helps if you take naptimes. Cherish the quiet times, before your child wakes up and when your child is asleep.

You may also want to get professional help, send your child to day care, let the grandparents help in babysitting, or entrust the child to a reliable niece or nephew. Even if these means paying for babysitting services, it would be worth it if it means you getting some peace and quiet.

If you're the type of parent who is used to being disconnected, you might not be able to focus on your child. You might start by taking a few seconds

off your bonding time with your child to check an email or a text message, answer a call, or log in to social networks. But this kind of behavior will teach your child how your distractions are more important than they are.

While many parents are guilty of this, you can fight it by always being conscious of what you're doing. Take precautions against such distractions by turning off your phone, deactivating notifications, and living the moment with your child.

How Different People Can Focus

In order to be a productive worker, you need to handle distractions well and learn the art of focusing on important things.

If you're working in the service industries, the following tips might help:

- When you serve your customers, do that and that alone. Be fully present when you do your job and disregard other problems, emails, or mobile phone.
- Deal with one customer at a time.
- Try to find time to refocus in the middle of your work. Clear distractions or an hour or so.
- Learn to let go of some tasks on hand by automating them, delegating them, posting an FAQ section on your site, outsourcing help, or breaking down the services.

- Be focused in your personal life. Learn to disconnect once you're off work and find peace of mind.

To avoid interruptions from your co-workers or staff as a boss, you might want to take note of these pointers:

- Don't make the decisions all by yourself. Let others do it too. Set parameters on when to interrupt you for decision-making.
- Schedule your unavailability. Set times when you are not to be interrupted.
- Appoint a second-in-command to help you make decisions.
- Set expectations as to when people can interrupt you when you're working.
- Focus on every problem and every interruption that comes your way.
- Focus on life outside of work and enjoy the peace and quiet while indulging in your creative hobbies and interests.

But how do you deal with your boss, if he or she is the source of your problem? Your boss might expect you to answer your calls, texts, or emails, to pull off long hours, or to work overnight. You have to deal with your boss by doing these things:

- Discuss your desire to focus with your boss. Convince him or her about how finding focus will improve your creativity and productivity.
- Determine the factors that you can control and those that you can't. Change those controllable factors to help you focus. For instance, you can clear your desk or computer desktop. If you can't do away

with ignoring emails, at least don't distract yourself by surfing the web.

- Try to work out of the office. If you have the liberty to work at home or anywhere else without distractions, do so.
- Show your boss that all these changes to find focus really work.
- Find another job. If your boss doesn't approve of your pursuit of focus, consider changing jobs.

If you do find unsupportive people around, people who do not approve of all the changes that you want to make to find focus, don't force them. Let them understand how important it is for you to be able to focus. Make sure to ask for their help. If you can't convince them with words, show them an example. Show them how the changes you planned to find focus will work. Settle with the changes that you can make, with the lack of support of other people.

How to Change Office Culture

Modern offices boast of being productive and efficient. However, workers are constantly interrupted by distractions, from emails and IMs to calls, calendar requests, meetings, and office chatter. All these distractions cause information overload and stress. They might even end up doing nothing at the end of the day, while paying attention to a lot of distractions.

You can create a more productive environment at work if you advise the employees to do these things:

- Tell them to figure out what to do for the day and settle with 3-5 important tasks. They should do this first thing in the morning.
- They should clear their desks and tune out all distractions to work on the first important task.
- They can devote about 30 minutes of your day to go through email and voicemail.
- They should focus on completing the rest of the tasks, with few interruptions.
- They should meet with you to look back on their day, discuss problems, and settle what tomorrow's tasks should be.
- They should wear headphones to drown out distractions.
- They can work at home for about two days per week, but make them report to you all the tasks that they have finished for the day.
- They should learn how to disconnect, starting with your effort to shut down the Internet for a few hours every day.

Soon enough, all these changes will accumulate to major changes that will help you and even the people around you find focus. Just make sure to show them how it should be done.

Conclusion

Being focused is a great challenge in these modern times when distraction comes from all sides. But you should acknowledge that the sources of distractions, from mobile phones and the Internet to people trying to talk to you are things that you can't also do completely without. This means that you just need to make do with these distractions by learning to limit their stream and their impact on your life.

It helps to be fully devoted to the cause of finding focus by showing willingness to make both minor and major changes. You can start small anyway by clearing your desk, avoiding clutter in the office or at home, or testing the waters by disconnecting a few minutes to a few hours every day. When you're strong enough to focus for hours or even for days, knowing that you won't lose or miss anything significant for doing so, you would see the real beauty of a peaceful and quiet environment. This, in turn, will help you become a more productive and creative individual.

If you want to make an even bigger change, you might want to help people find focus in their lives too. Start by telling them about how it's doing wonders for you. Then, show them how you're enjoying life now as a more focused person. If they refuse to give in, be patient and make do with the change that they can take.

As what this book has discussed, learn to go with the flow. Don't control the uncontrollable. Be flexible. Be strong in the face of distractions. Only then will you be able to focus and be a productive member of your home, office, and society in general.

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