

Attention Management

Change Your Life By Managing Your Attention



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Disclaimer:

We created this guide to help people manage and direct their attention so they can improve their productivity.

However, some people have neurological (or other medical) conditions like ADD & ADHD that make managing their attention hard or even impossible. While this guide may still benefit these people, it cannot take the place of a professional's opinion or treatment.

Neurological conditions should only be diagnosed by psychiatrists, psychologists, or neurologists. You should address other medical conditions with your family doctor.

In no way can any content in this guide be considered medical, neurological, or otherwise professional advice.

If you feel like your lack of attention might be a symptom of a more serious problem, please reach out to a trusted doctor or masters-level therapist.

Introduction



"Pay Attention!"

Shortly after hearing this, I was usually met with laughter from the classroom as the teacher glared at me. Almost without fail, more laughter would ensure once the teacher asked me a follow-up question that I invariably failed to answer.

Why couldn't I answer the question? Because the teacher was right - I wasn't paying attention.

My mind was elsewhere, thinking non-consequential thoughts or otherwise distracted when I should have been paying attention to the lesson at hand.

This scenario was far from my first lesson about the importance of paying attention, though.

From the time we can speak and move, people warn us to pay attention. It's almost always good advice.

Our parents told us to:

- Pay attention when we want to cross the street safely
- Pay attention, so we don't put our hand on a hot stove
- Pay attention when we are eating, so we don't make a mess

As a child, we are constantly reminded to "pay attention."

In my case, it was partly because I was an idiot, but mostly because paying attention is a habit that we should learn at a young age. Look at the above examples. If we don't pay attention, we quickly learn that a bad thing can - and likely will - happen.

As we grow up, though - we have full reign of our attention.

You might have a kid nagging you to pay attention to one of their tales or a partner telling you to put down your phone and pay attention to the movie, but that's about it.

Outside of meetings with the boss, even at work, we have free reign. Be honest, how many times have you been paying attention to your phone when you should be getting some work done? This is a safe place - you can be honest.

The funny thing is that managing your attention is more powerful now than ever. We only have so many hours in the day, so managing and directing our attention towards the important things is of utmost value.

If you are interested to learn more about attention management, you have landed in the right place. Sit back and get ready to learn how to direct your attention to the things that matter.

What is Attention Management?



Attention management is our most important defense against a world that is constantly conspiring to steal it.

Maura Nevel Thomas

(Award-Winning Speaker, Author & Trainer)

Attention management is exactly what it sounds like – the ability to manage your attention in an increasingly distracting world.

While time management is a powerful tool, it becomes almost redundant if you manage your attention. Think about it, would you even need to find extra hours in your week if you were paying attention to the right things in the first place?

We can't ever create more time, but we can all pay more attention.

That's one reason some people, who have found time management underwhelming or even impossible, have more success managing their attention.

In our opinion, the most important aspects of attention management are:

- Prioritizing
- Controlling Distractions (external and internal)
- Being Present in the Moment
- Maximizing Your Focus
- Finding Your Flow

If you can master these five aspects, you will accomplish more and experience higher levels of fulfillment and satisfaction.

Why Should I Care?

Have you been paying attention? Sorry – I couldn't help myself.

If explaining what attention management is didn't sell you, and you are still curious about what attention management can mean to your life, consider these benefits:

- You get more done
- Your quality of work improves
- You create more leisure time
- You will be working smarter, not harder
- You will be happier and more fulfilled
- Your relationships will improve
- You can live the life you designed
- Etc.

It's simple – directing your attention to the important things will mean you get more done.

You don't just get more done, though. One of the best parts of attention management is to begin living the life you designed. You get to choose what you focus on. It isn't a one-size-fits-all scenario. You get to focus on things with meaning and importance – to you.

One of the most important benefits is that anyone can do it. You don't need to acquire or pay for anything. You just learn the techniques, and you can use them.

Why Aren't I Doing This Already?



Heck of a question.

The most obvious answer is that you might simply not know what attention management is.

While it feels natural to focus on important things, it isn't always how we operate. Most people are taught to work on the tasks with the closest due date. This might be the right choice sometimes, but it isn't the right choice all the time.

When you focus on "due dates," you risk getting stuck doing busy work or unimportant tasks.

However, lack of knowledge isn't the only thing that holds us back from attention management.

Some other common reasons we struggle with attention management are:

- Internal distractions
- External distractions
- Worrying about others' opinions
- Can't figure out where to direct attention
- Substance use
- Medical or Neurological reasons (see disclaimer from earlier)
- Lack of sleep
- Stress
- Hunger or dehydration

There are plenty of reasons we struggle with our attention, but the good news is, there are ways we can take back control. The following pages will explain the steps you need to take so that you can begin to manage your attention fully.

Prioritization



Most of the attention management content out there focuses on paying better attention to important tasks. However, it often lacks a key step; figuring out what you should pay attention to in the first place.

If your end goal is to pay more attention to important things, it makes sense to figure out what those important things are. Properly prioritizing your goals, tasks, and to-dos will help you accomplish this.

Prioritization is the action or process of deciding the relative importance of things.

Once you have discovered the relative importance of things in your life, you will know exactly where to direct your attention.

Why Is It Important?

This almost feels self-explanatory. Knowing what tasks are most important or urgent helps you properly direct your attention. You know which tasks mean the most to you and your success, so you can give them the attention they deserve.

Some other benefits of prioritization include:

- Increased productivity
- Reduced stress

- Urgent/Important work gets the attention it requires
- You waste less time and energy
- Overall quality of work improves
- You will feel happier and more satisfied
- You will free up more time
- Keeps you motivated
- Helps you avoid procrastination

Even if you do nothing else in this guide, you will benefit immensely from prioritizing your tasks.

Best Practices

It is easy to start prioritizing your tasks. All it takes is some quiet reflection and time to think. A notebook or note app will also be invaluable.

1. What Are Your Tasks?

Take some time to brainstorm a list of all the tasks you are responsible for. There is nothing too small or silly to include, so don't edit as you go. Write down as many tasks – personal or professional – that you must accomplish. Think about tasks you want to tackle but haven't found the time for as well.

2. What Matters the Most?

This step will be unique to everyone. Take some time to think about the list you created and then highlight the most important tasks to you. It can be hard to distinguish what is important but consider your goals. If you are struggling, ask yourself questions like:

- Which tasks propel me towards my goals?
- Which tasks honor my personal preferences and desires?
- Which tasks will hurt me the most if I don't finish them?
- Which tasks require my input the most?

Ideally, you want to balance tasks that you need to complete to stay afloat, along with other tasks that help you realize goals, dreams, and desires.

3. Which Tasks are Urgent?

This step is purely about time sensitivity. Which tasks on your list have specific due dates or need to be done as soon as possible. These are quite often work-related tasks that have deadlines.

Other times, these are tasks that you need to complete before moving on to something else. Whatever the reason, highlight the tasks you need to finish sooner than later.



4. The Important-Urgent Matrix

The heavy lifting is already done. You know the tasks you need to accomplish, and you have an idea of which ones are important and urgent. One way to properly prioritize these tasks is with the **Important-Urgent Matrix**.

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	<p>DO IT!</p> <p>These tasks often pop up out of nowhere or are due to procrastination.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your client has an emergency• You have a last-minute deadline• There's an emergency at home	<p>SCHEDULE IT</p> <p>These tasks might not even have a deadline, but they are important to your overall vision or goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning long- or short-term goals• Self-Care• Learning or improving skills
NOT IMPORTANT	<p>DELEGATE</p> <p>This is busy work. Tasks that need to be done daily but don't progress you towards your goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Household chores• Responding to emails• Some meetings or calls with colleagues/clients	<p>DELETE</p> <p>These are the things that you do daily that need to be cut out or down on.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Certain bad habits• Social media obsessions• Excessive TV watching

Now that you have your tasks organized in the Important-Urgent Matrix, you can start working on them. Tasks in the red and yellow zones are where you should be directing the most attention.

5. Review and Adjust Regularly

Prioritization isn't something you just do once and then sit back and cruise. You should try to review your tasks and adjust your matrix regularly.

Aim to do this review monthly but if you have a hectic life or a lot of tasks to stay on top of, consider reviewing and reflecting once a week. It doesn't take that long, and the more you do it, the quicker you will be.

Control Distractions



Now that you have a better idea of where you should direct your attention, it is time to figure out ways to maximize and manage it.

One of the most important steps you can take is to control your distractions.

We live in an unbelievably distracting world. It isn't just socio-economic upheaval; it is also the inundation of technology. All this technology that was supposed to make our lives easier makes our lives more complicated and distracting.

Our phone is a super-computer that fits in our pockets. This wonderful feat of technology can answer any question we have. It keeps us connected to family and friends across the globe. Amazing, right?

However, it isn't all good. Our phones are also a never-ending stream of distractions. We get notifications about useless emails, spam calls, and our Candy Crush lives being reset.

Why Is It Important?

As distracting as our phones can be, they are simply one distraction in a world that is full of them.

If you want to pay more attention to things that matter, it makes sense to reduce, control, or eliminate the distractions that steal our attention.

Being able to control distractions will also help you:

- Get more work done
- Find more free time
- Keep you focused
- Help you stay in the flow
- Can increase your attention span
- Decreases stress
- Improves your memory

As you can see, the ability to control distractions is invaluable in your quest for success. Below you will find some common distractions and ways to deal with them.

Common Distractions

Distractions come in two main forms. **External distractions** originate outside of you. These are the most common distractions. These would be things like your phone or outside noise.

Internal distractions are your thoughts and emotions – these can be just as distracting in certain circumstances, though.

External

Your Phone

We mentioned our phones earlier. These are the biggest distraction in most people's lives. The good news is, it is easy to deal with – just shut it off or put it in airplane mode. If you struggle to do this, keep your phone in an entirely separate room when you need to concentrate and get something done.

Other People

Whether it is coworkers dropping in for a chat, office gossip, or friends and family not respecting your boundaries, other people are often big distractions. Social connection is important, but it's fine to set boundaries.

If you have something important you need to focus on, let the people in your life know you need peace and quiet. Most people will appreciate your honesty and respect your wishes. If people regularly ignore your requests for peace and quiet, you may need to have a serious one-on-one chat with them.

Social Media

Social media is another relatively new development in our lives. It is a major distraction, though. People have *died* by not paying attention to their surroundings while trying to get the perfect pic *for the 'Gram*.

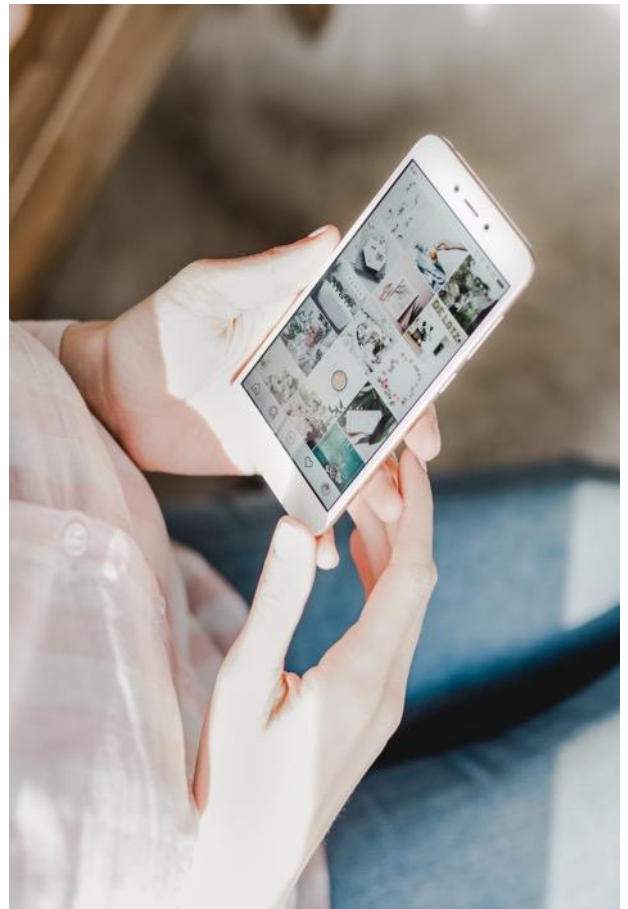
That is an extreme example, but you have likely caught yourself scrolling through Facebook, Instagram, or TikTok when you should have been doing something else.

The best way to overcome this distraction is to put away any of your devices. However, you might need your computer or phone for work, and putting it away isn't an option. If that's the case, consider finding an app that lets you block these social media sites when you need to pay attention to something important.

Email

Email is another huge distraction we all deal with.

On a positive note, email is a great way to communicate, and in theory, should save us time from making calls or attending meetings. However, the problem is that we find it so hard to detach from.



How do you react when you hear an email notification? So many people drop what they are doing to check their email instantly. Even if you just check the sender or subject, then go back to work, you are still distracted. It takes you time to get back into the flow. You have to refocus your attention which takes both time and effort.

The easiest way to deal with this is to set certain times you check your email. Maybe you only check it once in the morning and the afternoon. Setting specific times to check your email will ensure that you stay on track and your important tasks get your full attention.

Internet

While email and social media are part of the Internet, they are far from the only distractions hidden within.

The Internet provides us with access to all the information in the world. That's great, but it also provides us with plenty of distractions:

- Restaurant menus to browse
- Online stores to shop at
- Video websites to get lost in
- Gaming websites to get lost in
- Vacation websites to dream about
- Wikipedia pages to read
- Etc...

None of these things are bad per se unless you spend time on them instead of paying attention to important tasks.

It's hard to avoid the Internet entirely since our professional and personal lives are so intertwined with it. The only ways to control this distraction are disconnecting when you can and practicing willpower when you can't. Some apps allow you to block your problem websites

at certain times, as well.



Noise

Outside noise can be one of the most distracting things we deal with. If you live in a city, you might regularly hear traffic and construction noises. You might work in a loud office. Even people who work from home must deal with leaf-blowing neighbors, barking dogs, and the normal sounds of family life.

Here are several steps that you can use to control noise distractions:

- Set expectations with people (both family and peers)
- Invest in noise-canceling headphones
- Try to find a workspace that is naturally quiet (For example - If you work from home, a basement room might be quieter)
- Drown out noise with white noise or an instrumental playlist
- Wear earplugs

- Create sound barriers (For example – extra insulation, quieter flooring, more plants)

Clutter

Clutter might not sound like a typical distraction, but clutter and disorganization can hurt your ability to concentrate and pay attention. First off, it is visually distracting. Secondly – and more importantly – the thought of it distracts our minds. It's hard to focus on important things when our mind is racing about how messy our workspace is.

If this sounds familiar to you, here are a couple of ways you can control clutter in your workspace:

- Make sure everything has its place
- Purge your belongings often
- Buy for your needs, not your desires
- Have an organized junk drawer for overflow
- Store things where you use them (For example - Office supplies in the office, kitchen supplies in the kitchen)
- Manage your mail – go paper-free when you can
- Don't beat yourself up if things get cluttered. Just organize and move on

Internal



Mood

Sometimes we just aren't in the mood to get things done. For whatever reason, we just can't bring ourselves to focus or pay attention to anything.

While this distraction can be hard to control, the best way to deal with it is to start. Think about the task at hand, and pinpoint one simple step you can take to get started. Often taking this simple step is all you need to settle into the task at hand.

A quick example is putting your running shoes on, even though you don't feel like going for a run. By taking this one simple step, you create positive momentum. It's much easier to get out the door for your run when all you have to do is get up and head out the door.

Self-Doubt

Self-doubt is one of the biggest distractions we deal with. It's not easy to pay attention to a task when our minds are screaming that we can't complete it anyway. In this case, our instinct is to give up. Why pay attention to a task you can't finish?

Self-doubt isn't always easy to deal with, but here are a few tips:

- Use affirmations in the morning
- Replace negative self-talk with positive self-talk
- Acknowledge and challenge your self-doubt
- Spend more time with people who believe in you
- Talk to a professional

- Keep a success log
- Reflect on past triumphs
- Stop comparing yourself to others

Fear

When we feel fear, our reaction is to either fight it or flee from it. Both behaviors can be distracting when you want to pay attention to your task. Fear is often related to self-doubt because we fear we might fail.

However, it isn't always about self-doubt. Sometimes we fear how others will react. Sometimes we fear the unknown – if we finish this task, what next? We even fear success sometimes. What will people expect from us if we finish this task? Will we be able to live up to their expectations?

Regardless of why you are dealing with fear, it would help to address it.

- **Reframe Failure** – You need to stop viewing failure as some sort of audit about your personality and abilities. Everyone fails from time to time, and how you bounce back defines you. Start to think about failure as a lesson learned. It isn't a bad thing. It's simply another chance for you to prove your mettle.
- **Examine Your Fear** – If you can pinpoint what is scaring you, drill down into it. Why do you have this fear? What is the worst that can happen? Have you ever successfully dealt with this situation before? What proof do you have that this fear isn't something to worry about?
- **Use The Nervous Energy** – The flight or fight response mentioned earlier has a physical effect. You can use the nervous energy and endorphins that fear creates. Do something active. Get in a great workout. Taking a physical break like this might be exactly what you need before settling in to focus on your tasks.

Boredom/Daydreaming

When we work on less exciting (but no less vital) tasks, it can be easy to get bored, drift off and think about better times. One second, we might be working, and the next, we are thinking about sunnier locations and breezier days.

If this sounds familiar, here are two different ways you can try and control this distraction:

- **Find Something Exciting** – This can be harder for some tasks than others, but it is important to find some exciting spark in the task at hand. For example, you might hate accounting tasks, but you like playing around in Excel. If that's the case, try to focus on that aspect of the task.
-
- **Make time For Daydreaming** – This might be a “hot take,” but I don't think there is anything wrong with daydreaming. It helps boost creativity and helps you discover goals that you might not have ever actively thought about.
-
- The key is to make time for daydreaming. Instead of letting it affect your productive time, schedule daydreaming sessions during downtime. Don't be afraid to put it right in your calendar.

Fatigue

Fatigue is another common internal distraction we all deal with. You have almost assuredly had your productivity hampered at times because you were too tired. When we are tired, our work suffers, and it's harder to pay attention.

The only real way to deal with this is to get more sleep.



Make sure you have a normal bedtime and morning routine. It would help if you created an environment that is conducive to sleep. This means a comfortable, clean bed and a properly dark/quiet room.

If you are getting enough sleep but still feel fatigued regularly – speak to your family doctor. Often, medical conditions that cause fatigue can be managed.

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By controlling both your internal and external distractions, you will find it easier to pay attention to what is important.

It isn't easy to control your distractions – especially internally – but the more you work at it, the easier it will get.

Be Present



“There is only one time that is important – NOW! It is the most important time because it is the only time that we have any power.”

Leo Tolstoy

Being present means that you are aware and active in the present moment.

You may have heard it referred to as "living mindfully" or mindfulness before. Essentially it means that your mind is where your body is. It isn't drifting off thinking about past regrets. It isn't thinking about something else.

Here is a quick example. Have you ever been with a friend who barely acknowledges you because they are playing around on their phone? That person isn't living in the moment. They are not present.

To become present, they would have to focus on the moment at hand – spending time with their friend.

Why It's Important

Being present isn't just about being a good friend, though. It is extremely important to you to manage your attention. How can you possibly pay attention to important tasks if you think about past regrets?

Living mindfully can help you in many other ways as well. Here are a few benefits of being present:

- Helps you manage stress
- [There is mounting evidence](#) it helps with symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Strengthens your relationships
- Improves creativity
- You appreciate life more
- Better attention to details
- Better decision making

Four Steps to Become More Present

Step One: Breathe

Breathing exercises are one of the best ways to tap into mindfulness. They are effective, free and you can do them anywhere. You can reduce stress and lower heart rate and blood pressure by paying attention to your breathing.

Sometimes a well-timed deep breath can help keep us in the moment by saving us from our emotions. Taking a deep breath before responding in anger is a key example. Instead of being lost in your emotion (anger in this case), your deep breath keeps you grounded in the moment. You avoid saying anything you regret, and you will think and respond more clearly.

While there are [many simple breathing exercises](#), a simple one to keep you in the present moment is **Mindful Breathing**.

Simply find a quiet, comfortable spot and just focus on your breathing. There is no need to manipulate your breath in any way. Just focus on your breathing. Note the sounds of inhaling and exhaling. Watch your torso rise and fall with each breath. Feel your chest and lungs expand and contract. This technique will help you release negative feelings and quiet a racing mind. Practice this technique regularly.

Step Two: Engage Each Sense

So often, we rush through this world without paying attention to anything. We are too busy to notice the world around us. We are too busy fretting about the past and worrying about the future.

Stop and take a look around. Notice the sights—breath in the air and notice the smell. Think about how the fabric of your favorite sweater feels against your skin. Take a sip of your coffee and try to pick out the particular flavor notes.

Take some time each day to engage all the senses available to you.

Step Three: Appreciate Small Pleasures

A great way to stay in the present moment is to appreciate the small pleasures we usually take for granted. When you take the time to appreciate different aspects of your life, you pay more attention to them. Noticing the positive things in your life – no matter how small – is an effective use of attention management.

Try to spend some time each day appreciating the small pleasures in your life.

Here are some examples to help get you started:

- The sunshine
- Sound of birds singing
- A smile from a neighbor
- A nice breeze
- A beautiful flower
- The sound of children's laughter
- Etc.



Step Four: Stick With it

This is the most important step of all. Becoming more present isn't a one-off. You need to commit to it. It must become part of your routine. The more you use the above steps, the more present you will become.

Double down on the three steps above if you start to feel like you aren't living mindfully.

Maximize Focus



“Concentrate all your thoughts upon the work at hand. The sun’s rays do not burn until brought to a focus.”

Alexander Graham Bell

Maximizing (or maintaining) your focus is another huge part of attention management. After all, the textbook definition of focus (at least as we are using it) is: *“pay particular attention to.”*

The ability to focus means that you not only pay attention to the task at hand, but you can also sustain that attention. Focus is quite often the difference between success and failure.

Why It’s Important

At one point or another, you have surely struggled with your focus. You know how much it can kill your productivity and hinder your ability to concentrate. What's the point of figuring out where to direct your attention if you can't focus long enough to accomplish anything?

The ability to focus helps you:

- Get more done
- Ignore distractions
- Build momentum
- Do your best work
- Feel more in control
- Stay positive

- Deal with potential obstacles
- Solve problems better
- Make better decisions

You can summarize the benefits of focus in five words: **more success with less stress.**

5-Step System to Boost Your Focus

Step 1: Create an Environment Conducive to Focus

The first step to a life of focus is to ensure that your workspace is focus-friendly. You want a comfortable and quiet area to start. Ideally, this would be its own room.

You also want to limit distractions – which is best accomplished by taking control of your technology. You also need to set expectations of people who may interrupt you. The good news is this guide includes an entire section about controlling distractions.

Step 2: What Time Works Best for You?

When do you typically focus the best? While you can't always choose your work hours, it does help if you honor your natural preferences. For example, if you work from home, what time do you find it easiest to focus? For some people, it might be early morning. For others, it might be late at night. People with families may find it easiest to focus when the children are at school.

Whatever the case, whenever possible, save the tasks that require the most focus for your preferred hours.

Step 3: Plan Your Day

Taking some time each morning (or the night before) to plan your day will pay off in increased productivity and attention to detail. When you plan your day, you tell yourself exactly what needs your attention.

Planning your day also helps you focus because there is no wasted time wondering what to do next. It's all there right in front of you.

It's simple to get started as well. You can start small by jotting down one major thing you need to accomplish each day. If that goes well, start jotting down a couple of tasks each day. Before you know it, you will be planning out each day and enjoying all the benefits that entail.

Step 4: Single-Task

Multitasking is a myth.

Phew that felt good to say. Multitasking was the "it" word in productivity for so many years. It was a badge of honor to juggle many different tasks at once. The concept makes sense. If you can get five things done at once, why not?

Well, the thing is, we can't. Humans aren't all that capable of doing multiple tasks at once. What we are doing is quickly switching between tasks. This might not seem like a big distinction, but it is. [Research](#) has indicated that we could lose up to 40% of our productivity due to task-switching.

[Stanford University research](#) tends to agree. They found that:

People who are regularly bombarded with several streams of electronic information do not pay attention, control their memory, or switch from one job to another as well as those who prefer to complete one task at a time, a group of Stanford researchers has found.

Try to spend more time dedicated to one task at a time.

Step 5: Take Breaks

Take more breaks If you want to focus better.

For some reason, that doesn't sound right. It doesn't make sense that breaking our focus will ...improve our focus? Huh?

The reality is taking regular breaks helps you sustain your focus for longer periods.

[Alejandro Lleras](#) explains it like this:

“...Deactivating and reactivating your goals allows you to stay focused,” he said. “From a practical standpoint, our research suggests that, when faced with long tasks (such as studying before a final exam or doing your taxes), it is best to impose brief breaks on yourself. Brief mental breaks will actually help you stay focused on your task!”

[Other research](#) has shown that regular breaks also help you retain information.

When it comes to attention management, breaks also give you a chance to step back and reflect on your current goals. Is this task the best use of your attention right now?

If you struggle to focus for long periods, start taking regular breaks.

Find The Flow



“Those who flow as life flows know they need no other force.”

Lao Tzu

A flow state is when your body and mind become one, both deeply focused on the task at hand. Distractions seem to melt away. You are getting more done, and it's the best work you have put out in ages. You don't bother to even look at the clock as the minutes – or even hours – drift away.

Positive psychologists Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Jeanne Nakamura describe being in the flow as becoming fully immersed in whatever you are doing.

While flow is closely related to focus, it's somehow entirely its own thing, as well.

Getting in the flow is almost like the essence of attention management. You have done everything right. Even the conditions out of your control somehow line up perfectly. You direct your focus on something important, you start working on it, and before you realize it, you have no urge to stop or even slow down.

You don't only focus on your task – you enjoy it. Nothing in the world can make you as happy as whatever you are working on in that moment.

Why It's Important

If the description above wasn't enough to sell you on getting into the flow, then consider these benefits of a Flow State:

- Greater enjoyment and fulfillment
- Unparalleled concentration
- Greater sense of clarity
- Release negative emotions
- Self-doubt, fear, and worry melt away
- Better performance
- Helps regulate your emotions.

The whole point of this guide - and attention management in general - is to help you direct your attention towards tasks that will improve your life. Getting into a flow state is the ultimate expression of that. It is your brain's most productive state.

Entering a Flow State

One of the biggest differences between focus and flow is our ability (or inability) to call upon them. When we need to focus, we can take steps to focus. However, we can't guarantee to reach a flow state. We can only put ourselves in the best position and hope for the best.

The good news is, the more you practice getting into a flow state, the easier it becomes. You can put yourself in the best position by following these rules:

One: Your Physical Needs Must Be Met

Getting into a flow state requires certain physical needs to be met. You don't want to risk being distracted by something like hunger or hydration. Make sure that you address needs like:

- **Hunger** – Either snack before beginning or have a handy snack nearby you can eat while working.

- **Hydration** – Ensure that you are well hydrated when you begin. Have a bottle of water within reach, as well.
- **Rest** – You should be well-rested. You will have a better chance of reaching a flow state when you aren't battling fatigue.
- **Caffeine?** – Strategic use of coffee can help you maintain focus and clarity while in a flow state.
- **Do you need to go to the bathroom?** Make sure you go to the bathroom before you sit down. There is no worse feeling than just about reaching a flow state before you are interrupted when nature calls.

Two: Your Mental Needs Must Be Met

While some people can feed off negative energy, most of us need a certain calmness to reach a flow state. You should ensure that you are aware of these mental aspects:

- **Calm & Relaxed** – It is much easier to reach a flow state when calm and relaxed. Stress or worry nagging at you will only hold you back.
- **Be Present** – We talked about this earlier. It is important to be present in the moment. Take some time to take in your surroundings.
- **Positive Thinking** – A negative attitude is a sure-fire way to sabotage your attempts at a flow state.

Three: Choose an Environment Conducive to Flow

You want to make sure you choose an environment that helps you get into a flow state. It's impossible to get in the flow when battling your surroundings. Think about things like:

- **Tidiness** – You want a tidy (if not minimalist) workspace to reach a flow state most easily. Less clutter means fewer things battling for your attention.
- **Quiet** – The quieter an area, the better for flow state.
- **Music/White Noise** – If you can't stand the quiet or need something to drown out more distracting sounds, consider a music playlist or white noise like a fan.
- **Distraction-Free** – We talked about this earlier. Dealing with your internal and external distraction contribute to your productivity.

Four: Choose the Right Time

This is another concept we mentioned before. Try to figure out if any time of the day impacts your ability to get into a flow state.

For example, if you find it way easier to get into the flow late at night, use that time to focus on your most important tasks.

Five: Focus on a Task That Matters

It is much easier to get into the flow state when your task matters. The task should be two things:

- Something You Care About
- Something Important to Your Goals

While it isn't required, it's also helpful if you genuinely enjoy doing the task.

Also, the keyword here is focus. You will never be able to enter a flow state while multitasking. Choose one important task and focus on that.

Conclusion



Everyone talks about time management.

It's one of the most widely discussed topics in the personal development world. There are countless books, websites, apps, and systems designed to address it.

It's a shame that people don't have the same craving to learn about **attention management**.

The hard truth is that learning to direct your attention to things that matter is far more valuable than managing your time. Once you commit to attention management, you might find out you don't have a problem with time at all!

That's the power of attention management. What you pay attention to is what you are.

After reading this guide, you should be able to:

- Prioritize
- Control Distractions (external and internal)
- Be Present in the Moment
- Maximize Your Focus
- Find Your Flow

Once you achieve these five steps, you will find yourself paying attention to important tasks more often and fully.

The results will follow. You will get more things done and be propelled towards all your goals.

What are you waiting for? It's time to start "paying attention."