



# THE FOCUSED MIND

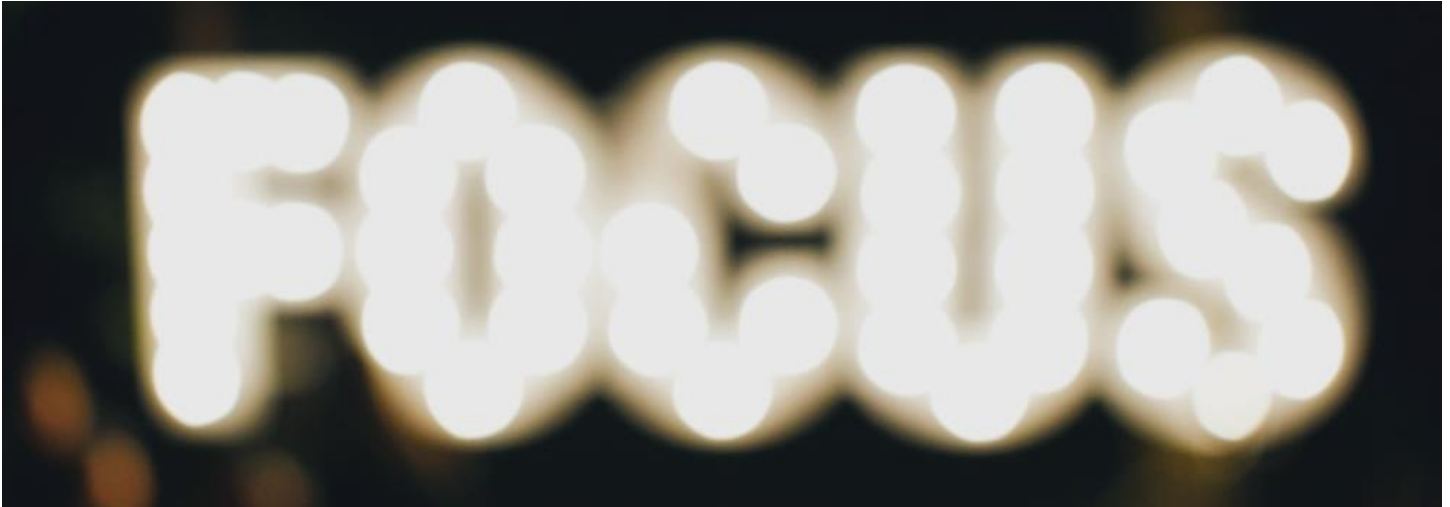
**A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO  
CONCENTRATION AND CLARITY**

The Focused Mind ©

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## INTRODUCTION & COURSE OVERVIEW



Staying focused is easy when you care about what you're doing. Your concentration improves if you are emotionally invested. When you're focused, the output of whatever you are doing improves. You get things done quicker and easier with less stress.

Your level of motivation aside, why is focusing sometimes easy and at other times impossible? We'll uncover that and many other facts about focus in this course. Just know there is hope if you struggle to focus, so keep reading.

This course provides practical strategies and resources to enhance your concentration. By the end of the course, you can create an on-demand focus you can turn to at any time. You'll learn to minimize distractions and ignore them when they can't be eliminated. This can help you achieve your professional and personal goals in any area of your life.

What's in the course? Let's take a look.

### **Module 1: Understanding Focus**

There is a natural link between concentration and focus. We'll explore the science behind that connection. We'll share some myths about focus you shouldn't believe. You'll learn the importance of focus in achieving personal and professional success.

## **Module 2: Barriers to Focus**

In module two, you will learn about how multitasking affects your ability to focus. You discover how technology can hinder or boost your focus. And you'll learn proven methods for identifying and minimizing any distractions that may threaten that.

## **Module 3: Strategies for Enhancing Focus**

Module three explains how goal-setting helps you maintain focus. This module is dedicated to 10 techniques for improving concentration and entering a state of flow where you stay focused and "in the zone."

## **Module 4: Applying Focus to Achieve Your Goals.**

This final module will explore how staying focused can help you reach your goals. You will be given strategies for staying focused on long-term goals and action-planning tips to help you focus on goal achievement. You also see some case studies of successful individuals who have mastered the art of focus.

Each module ends with a reminder of the important takeaways that were covered. You'll also be given some exercises to perform that reinforce what you have learned.

If you are ready to harness the power of focus to achieve more personal and professional success, turn to Module 1, and let's get started.

# MODULE 1: UNDERSTANDING FOCUS



Focus is a mental tool. Like any tool, you get the best performance from it if you understand how it works. Let's quickly dive into the scientific processes that influence your focus level.

## THE SCIENCE BEHIND FOCUS AND CONCENTRATION

Neurologists tell us that we have tens of thousands of thoughts each day. Most of them are repetitive and highly negative. The millions of pieces of data our brain processes trigger some of our thoughts.

It's impossible to deal with all the incoming information, so the brain filters out what it deems unnecessary. This is done through the Reticular Activating System (RAS).

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

How does it know what's important and what's not? The objects of your focus partially determine this.

When you act on specific bits of data or sensory experiences, the Reticular Activating System notices. It determines that this bit of data must be important. The next time the experience arises, the importance is magnified. The RAS communicates with other parts of your brain to let them know it has encountered something important to you.

It's one of the reasons bad habits and addictions are difficult to defeat. Every time the behavior is repeated, the brain reaffirms its importance. You continue to reinforce those behaviors as long as you keep repeating them.

## ROUTINES, PLANS & SCHEDULES ARE IMPORTANT

This is excellent news, though. It means by consciously improving your focus, your brain will see it as important and help you concentrate.

It's why regular routines, action plans, and schedules are so important if you want to succeed at just about anything. They ensure you regularly focus on a task, activity, or goal. When you repeatedly think about something or perform a behavior, your brain switches from conscious to unconscious action, where habits are born.

There are a lot more biological and scientific processes involved. However, that's a basic explanation of how you can naturally improve a skill by repeating it.

## COMMON MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT FOCUS

Myths can be based on many things. They come from past assumptions and traditions and may even have factual origins. Some are entirely made up. Often, people believe myths and continue to pass them on simply because it's easier than facing facts.

Here are five common misconceptions about focus you should take note of.

### 1. Start now, and the focus will come.

Sometimes, this may be true. You could jump in and get it done if you've been putting something off for a long time. Many times, though, it will be much easier to focus if you create a plan of action first.

Do your homework. Compile the resources and tools you are going to need. Talk to people who have accomplished what you are trying to do. Take all this information and develop a detailed, step-by-step plan. When focusing is difficult, you can turn to your action plan to see the next step.

### 2. You can't be focused if you're taking breaks.

Focus has different levels. A short-term goal can be completed quickly without needing a break. A long-term goal will take many steps to achieve. You will only accomplish it by taking breaks.

Breaks help you focus. You would be exhausted mentally and physically without taking regular breaks. Your quality of work would suffer, too. Breaks are essential to resting and refreshing your brain so you can focus better when working.

### **3. Your level of focus never changes.**

This is far from the truth. You can change anything you put your mind to.

The more you consciously work on directing your attention, the more skilled you become at being focused. Once you learn to focus, it can be applied to all areas of your life.

### **4. Getting up early boosts your concentration.**

This may or may not be true. If your biological clock prefers mornings, that's great. If it prefers the afternoon and evening hours, rising in the morning could be counterproductive. Wake up one or two hours before you usually do. You might find it easier to focus because there are fewer distractions. If you don't, don't push the issue.

Find the best time of day for you to concentrate and use it to your advantage. This can be a different time for everyone, so experiment until you find your sweet spot.

### **5. If you are busy, you are more productive.**

Busy and focused are different things. Texting, social media, and skipping from task to task will keep you busy, but none of those are productive. Spend a day doing them and see just how little work you accomplish.





Great focus leads to excellent productivity. When you are focused, you get the essential things done. You make great strides in achieving your goals.

## THE IMPACT OF FOCUS ON PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS

The conscious part of your mind only influences about 5% of your life. The rest is left to your RAS, subconscious mind, and other biological processes. The RAS and subconscious are nonjudgmental. They respond to the data they receive. When behaviors are repeated often, your subconscious mind takes over managing those tasks from the conscious part of your brain.

Neurologists will tell you that approximately 95% of your life experience is created by your subconscious. That might be hard to wrap your mind around, but it's also exciting.

Think about it. This means you can program yourself to succeed at just about anything. You can hardwire your mind to regulate processes without conscious thought.

Your ability to concentrate directly influences your personal and professional success level. So, develop a regular schedule to work on improving your concentration. You will become subconsciously and effortlessly good at shutting out distractions and focusing on whatever you need to.

## A REAL-WORLD EXAMPLE OF FOCUS INFLUENCING SUCCESS

Some people struggle with finances for much of their adult lives. They move in the right direction financially, but something gets in their way. They blame it on bad luck.

The real issue might be that they need to focus more on using proven methods for generating wealth. They don't think about their finances. They spend without conscious thought. They live paycheck to paycheck with little thought on where the money goes. They know the next payday is coming.



To make changes, they start spending time reading books on finance. They may take a course online. They become conscious of their spending habits. Their brain notices this focused attention. It triggers the subconscious to get involved. Suddenly, less focus is needed because they automatically and unconsciously perform actions that lead to better financial health.

When their focus on finances was poor, they were poor. Now that their focus has improved, they also see improvement in their finances.

The reason this is so powerful is because of what we mentioned earlier. Your subconscious creates almost your entire life experience. If you want healthier relationships, more self-confidence, financial independence, or just about anything, wake up your subconscious by showing it your point of focus, which is important to you.

Then, develop a schedule that reinforces the importance of it. Your repeated concentration wakes up the power of your subconscious. It drives most of your behaviors and habits. This means that what you focus on will lead you to an inevitable conclusion.

Focus on the wrong things, and you will have little success in the important areas of your life. Concentrate on the actions needed to succeed personally or professionally, and chances are you will succeed.

## MODULE 1 – IMPORTANT TAKEAWAYS

- Repetition tells your brain's Reticular Activating System (RAS) what is important to you. Repetitively focusing on something makes concentrating and staying in a flow state easier.
- Short breaks help your mind and body rest, giving you better concentration when you return to your task.
- Being busy does not equal improved focus and productivity. Developing an action plan to focus on essential tasks is better than staying busy.
- When you force yourself to focus, your subconscious notices that focus is important to you. It then influences your habits and actions by providing more focus.

## MODULE 1 EXERCISES

Reflect on times when you enjoyed excellent concentration. This reminds you that focusing your attention can create success in both your professional and personal lives.

**When Was the Last Time You Enjoyed Excellent Concentration:**

**What Helped You Maintain That Level of Focus?**

*Think about things like: where you were, what you were doing and what was happening around you.*

## **HOMEWORK**



- Get in touch with your Reticular Activating System (RAS) by developing a schedule of focused activity. Perform to the best of your abilities.
- The next time you find yourself doing busy work, stop. Develop an action plan of the steps you must take to achieve your goal.

## MODULE 2: BARRIERS TO FOCUS



Characters in science fiction films and books may encounter an invisible force field. It's a barrier they can't see, but it limits their ability to move forward.

Like this invisible force field, you may experience roadblocks on your journey to success. Luckily, once you identify what's in your way, you can apply strategies to minimize or remove their impact.

### COMMON DAILY DISTRACTIONS

Your concentration will be interrupted regardless of who you are, what you are doing, or where you are located. It's inevitable. It happens even to the most focused people.

Here are a few common distractions you might face as you do your day-to-day tasks.

#### ELECTRONICS

Since Philo Taylor Farnsworth unveiled the TV set in San Francisco on September 7, 1927, TV has been a focus killer. Desktop computers, laptops and tablets, gaming consoles, and smartwatches are other electronic devices that threaten to rob you of your concentration.

#### DECISIONS

It's estimated that the average adult makes roughly 35,000 remotely conscious decisions per day. That's considerable even if many are not conscious decisions. Fixating on just a fraction of these decisions can cause mental fatigue and poor focus.

## **CELL PHONE**

Zippia.com reports that people check their phones nearly 100 times each day. They spend an average of 5 hours and 24 minutes on their mobile device daily.

Those statistics show just how distracting phones can be.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

How many times a day do you check Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, or Pinterest? Social media sites can provide a much-needed break during a busy day and be concentration-killing distractions.

## **EMAIL**

The average person checks their email several times daily, with professionals checking it as many as 20 times daily. As with social media, a five-minute session checking and responding to emails can quickly become half an hour or more of poor productivity.

## **CLUTTER**

Confusion loves disorder. The average person spends almost an hour a day looking for lost items because they have too much clutter. Clutter doesn't just eat up physical space. It negatively affects your mental and emotional well-being, too. A cluttered environment interferes with your focus and productivity.

## **YOUR JOB**

Noisy colleagues, office interruptions, demanding bosses, lengthy meetings, ringing phones, and more can be sources of distraction. Tension, unresolved work issues, and unclear directions create anxiety, which impedes your focus.

## FRIENDS AND FAMILY

You love your friends. Your family is important to you. You don't want to hurt anyone's feelings. However, if you don't set and enforce borders in your relationships, those closest to you may unintentionally become distractions.

## HUNGER

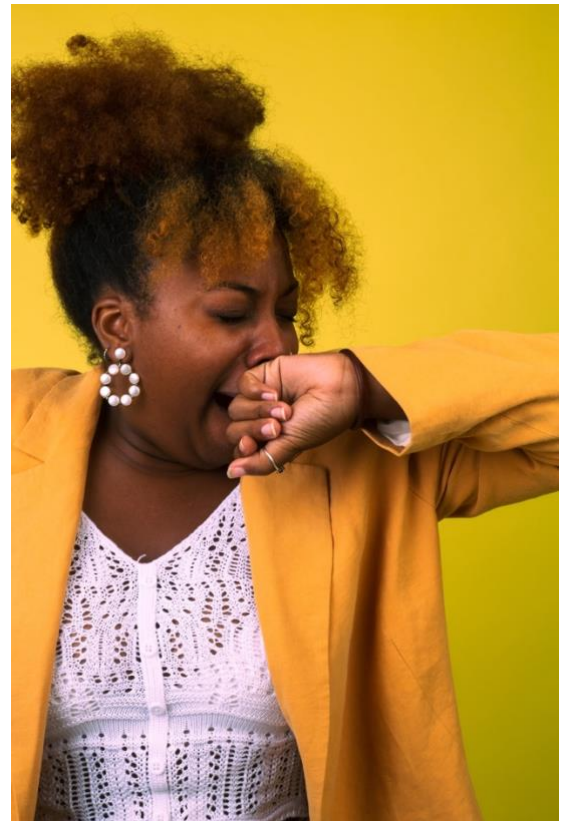
Focusing can be challenging when your stomach is growling. Hunger is tied to low blood sugar and energy, directly affecting focus. When you are hungry, you can only focus on stopping the uncomfortable feeling and food.

## FATIGUE

Whether it's from poor sleep, too few breaks, illness, stress, or anxiety, being mentally and physically exhausted makes concentrating difficult. When you are tired, your thought process slows. You are less alert, and you need help to focus.

## ADDICTION

Addictions can be so powerful that they constantly beg for your attention. It doesn't matter what the addiction is, drugs, alcohol, gambling, food, tobacco, or something else; the brain is so focused on the pleasure the addiction brings that it struggles to focus on anything else.





## INCESSANT THOUGHTS

No matter how hard you try, sometimes your thoughts won't stop. They are constant, negative most of the time, and, unfortunately, powerful. These thoughts keep you from focusing on the important things.

## THE IMPACT OF MULTITASKING ON FOCUS

Multitasking is never an efficient use of your time. It leads to stress and frustration, poor productivity, and mental fatigue.

Have you ever set out to clean and organize the kitchen only to find it still dirty and disorganized hours later? Thinking back, you realize you went to put something away, saw the dirty bathroom, and cleaned it. While cleaning, you noticed the laundry basket was full, so you started a load of laundry. You saw the overflowing garbage can in the utility room, so you took out the trash. While outside, you remembered you needed to check the oil and antifreeze in your car and took care of that.

This is multitasking - constantly switching from one task to the next. As you can see, it is not an efficient use of your time. Sure, the trash is out, the bathroom is clean, a load of laundry is washed, and the car is ready for cold weather, but that is not the goal you set for yourself hours ago. Now, you're tired. You can't even think about starting in the kitchen. It will have to wait until tomorrow or the next day.

Remember how we talked about your conscious mind only making up about 5% of your brainpower? When consciously switching from one activity to another, your mind can quickly become overtaxed. This negatively affects your ability to focus and concentrate. You are more prone to making mistakes. You easily become distracted.

As reported by Lifespan.org, your focus isn't the only victim of multitasking. Increased stress levels raise your blood pressure and your heart rate. The self-doubt and frustration you experience from not being productive can lead to anxiety and even depression.

To help combat this, use the FOCUS rule instead.

- **F**ollow
- **O**ne
- **C**ourse
- **U**ntil
- **S**uccess

Start one task. Complete it, and then move on. It's so much easier to focus on one task than several simultaneously. When you focus on one task, you can do a better job and create a higher-quality output.

By forcing yourself to focus on one task at a time, your future ability to focus also improves. Your subconscious and RAS assist in this because they have determined it is important.

## THE PROS & CONS OF TECHNOLOGY



We mentioned that consumer electronics, email, social media, and phones can keep you from concentrating. Technology is getting in the way of you doing what you need to do.

If there are digital screens and monitors running in your surroundings, they beg for your attention. Your diligent sensory network makes focusing difficult even if you concentrate on something else.

You know about the classic five senses: sight, smell, hearing, touch, and taste. Philosophers, neurologists, and others will tell you humans have as many as 21 senses. Either way, these systems are constantly working.

Your complex sensory system is constantly processing everything around you. It's trying to decide if anything it encounters poses a danger to you. Your senses are also seeking potential

rewards. This is why you smile when you see a text message from a friend. Your senses are telling you this is something you might enjoy experiencing.

Focus can be tricky even with just a few internet-connected or electronically powered devices vying for your attention.

## TECHNOLOGY ISN'T ALL BAD

Technology isn't entirely negative. Here are a few ways you can use technology to improve your concentration level.

- White noise machines create sounds in a frequency range that helps the human mind concentrate.
- Noise-canceling headphones keep unwanted sounds from distracting you.
- Freedom, StayFocusd, TrackTime, RescueTime, and Concentrate are apps that help you manage your time to be more focused.
- Cell phones give instant access to friends, family, and coworkers. When you need to reach out, you can instead of continually thinking about needing to.
- The Internet provides instant access to information. You can quickly find what you want and stay focused on the task.
- Fitness trackers help you improve your health. The healthier you are in your mind and body, the easier it is to focus.
- Sleep trackers let you monitor your sleep patterns. Not getting enough restful sleep can lead to mental fog and a lack of clarity rather than directed focus.

Technology is what you make of it. These technology-based resources can help you train your brain to focus more often than not.

## STRATEGIES FOR IDENTIFYING AND MINIMIZING DISTRACTIONS



Life is too busy on the best of days. When you're distracted day after day, it can leave you feeling frustrated and stressed.

### IDENTIFYING FOCUS-ROBBING DISTRACTIONS

To minimize or eliminate distractions, you must first recognize them. Here are a few ways to spot potential distractions.

#### Monitor Your Schedule

We mentioned earlier how a plan of action provides focus. When your concentration drifts, refer to your plan. It keeps you focused and on track.

Each evening, create a plan for the following day. As you do so, keep your eyes open for potential distractions. Preventing distractions will always be easier than dealing with them once they appear.

#### Change Your Environment

When you cannot focus, change your physical environment and mental outlook. Clear your mind of thoughts related to the task at hand. Relax your body.

After a short break, return to what you were doing. This reset can give you a fresh set of eyes to spot sensory distractions you may have overlooked in your environment.

#### Practice Mindfulness and Meditate

Being mindful of your surroundings, thoughts, and feelings gives you a clear path to see what might hinder your focus. The more you practice being mindful, the clearer your observations will be.

Meditation acts as a cleansing process for your mind. It can quiet your racing thoughts and let you see things more clearly. It only requires a little time, and it can be performed anywhere. You can turn to this age-old stress reliever and productivity enhancer any time during the day when you fall out of focus.

Several apps can help you with this. Insight Timer, Mindfulness Coach, Smiling Mind, Healthy Minds Program, and UCLA Mindful are just a few. You can alternately turn to YouTube for guided meditation videos.

### **Start a Focus Journal**

Journaling can help you identify patterns of bad behavior. You'll also discover the times, places, and habits that lead to excellent focus and concentration.

Keep a journal with you at all times. When you feel like you have been exceptionally productive, take a few minutes to record the experience. What is your environment like? Are you doing something special? Did something boost your focus?

Do the same when you are struggling to focus. Write down what actions, behaviors, or habits led to where you are or are not enjoying great focus. Refer to your journal regularly to identify distractions to your concentration.

## **10 TIPS FOR MINIMIZING DISTRACTIONS TO FOCUS**

Once you have identified the focus-robbing distractions, use the following tips to manage or eliminate them.

1. Turn off alerts and notifications on your electronics when you need to focus.
2. Clean up, organize, and declutter your environment at home and work.

3. Develop a designated and distraction-free workspace.
4. Stop multitasking. Tackle one task at a time to completion.
5. Create an action plan to keep you focused.
6. Schedule focused time. Let others know you aren't to be disturbed.
7. Take short breaks. Stretch or take a short walk to get your blood and oxygen flowing. Move to a quiet place to relax if needed.
8. Break big jobs into bite-sized pieces.
9. Get seven or eight hours of sound and restful sleep every night for more focus and better concentration during the day.
10. Use noise-canceling headphones or white noise to offset audible distractions.



## MODULE 2 – IMPORTANT TAKEAWAYS

- Electronics, too many decisions, social media, clutter, incessant thoughts, addictions, hunger, email, friends, and family are just a few distractions you may face daily.
- Multitasking is the practice of handling multiple activities or responsibilities simultaneously. It can kill your productivity and your focus.
- FOCUS, an acronym for Follow One Course Until Success, promotes better concentration and productivity.
- Technology can destroy your ability to focus, but it can be beneficial if used correctly.
- Identifying distractions is the first step to preventing them. You can identify them by monitoring your schedule, changing your environment, practicing mindfulness, meditating, and journaling.
- A few ways to minimize the negative impact of distractions or eliminate them include turning off notifications on your electronics, getting organized, tackling one task at a time, creating an action plan, and taking breaks.

## MODULE 2 EXERCISES

Use a calendar or planner and start with the most important tasks. Schedule each day the night before.

Start with your day tomorrow. What are the 3 most important tasks for you to accomplish? Write down anything you might need to accomplish those tasks.

**Important Task #1**

**Important Task #2**

**Important Task #3**



Look at your two most used environments: at home and on the job. What do you need to clean, declutter, and organize them to minimize distractions.

[illegible]

## **HOMEWORK**



- Use your phone's "do not disturb" feature to silence notifications while performing an important task.

## MODULE 3: STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING FOCUS



In this module, we'll explore the importance of setting goals and how they can help you maintain focus. Then, we will give tips to help you concentrate and become highly productive.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF GOALSETTING IN MAINTAINING FOCUS

Focus is all about channeling your attention and your energy. You direct it towards a particular task or endeavor rather than letting your concentration wander. This leads to better productivity. You get more done in less time. That can improve your level of success professionally and personally.

Goals can help you maintain focus and get more done.

#### GOALS INSPIRE ACTION

If you only have a vague idea of the reality you want to create, you may never make that happen. It may only ever be a wish or dream you have.

Goals take those desires and make them concrete. You give yourself a path from where you are now to where you want to be. Proper goal setting means clearly defining what you want to do. You are very specific and know how to measure your progress or lack thereof. Then, you draw up a step-by-step process to accomplish the goal.

These processes start to make goal achievement look possible. Instead of just being a nice thought, you have detailed instructions to act upon. This action plan inspires you to take steps towards achieving the goal.

A goal and action plan provide focus when needed. You can refer to it to see how far you've come and what step is next. Nothing is left to chance.

Spending time creating your goals and the plans to achieve them tells your brain that this is important. This triggers the focus and motivation needed to take the steps necessary to make your goal a reality.

## SMART GOALS LEAD TO SUCCESS

If you've ever wondered what a SMART goal is, it's a goal that meets specific criteria. SMART stands for:

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievable
- **R**elevant
- **T**ime-bound

When creating your goals, be specific. Provide as much detail as you can about the goal you want to achieve. Make sure you can measure your progress. Goals should be challenging but achievable. There's no point in setting a goal if it's impossible to achieve.

Ensure your goals align with your values, beliefs, and more significant life goals. If they aren't relevant to the overall life you're trying to create, you won't achieve them.

Finally, they need specific due dates. Draw up a timeline for their achievement. This includes dates and times for the smaller milestones you must reach to achieve the larger goal.

When you set SMART goals, you eliminate distractions. On days when you don't feel motivated or driven to take action, you can refer to this information. Your goal provides clarity so you know what to do next.

## GOALS PROVIDE MOMENTUM

Part of your SMART goal is knowing how to measure your progress. Seeing progress can be very addicting, in a good way. It builds momentum.

When you encounter progress, your brain triggers the release of dopamine and other chemicals that promote positive feelings. This gets you fired up and motivated to take the next step. Focus is automatic because you see good things happening.

## GOALS PROMOTE SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-CONFIDENCE



When you take action on your newly created plan, something extraordinary happens. Your self-esteem and self-confidence grow. Even if you encounter difficulties and slow progress, you feel good about yourself for taking action to reach your goals.

Setting, chasing, and achieving goals builds character. Since your goal provides direction by telling you what to do each step of the way, taking action is easy. Even when you face setbacks, recovering and getting back on track is easier. You start to feel good about yourself for acting in the face of difficulty.

The improved self-esteem and self-confidence you receive from creating and pursuing goals gives you a better self-image. Your positive emotional and mental states mean it's easier to focus and concentrate.

## TECHNIQUES FOR IMPROVING CONCENTRATION

When you are "in the zone" or "in the groove," productivity is high. Producing a great outcome is easy. Then, there are times when you need help to get started and build momentum. The following tips can help when you struggle to take action.

## PRIORITIZE YOUR TASKS

We talked earlier about the importance of scheduling for better focus. To develop on-demand concentration, prioritize your tasks before you schedule them.

- Which tasks mean the most to you?
- Which are urgent and must be done today, even if they aren't goal-related?
- Which are important but could be put off for another day?
- Which tasks do not need your attention? Could you get someone else to do them?
- Which ones are not urgent or important?

Answering questions like these gives you a clear picture of what requires immediate focus and what can be scheduled for later, reassigned, or eliminated. When your schedule is filled with only the most important tasks, you can focus better on completing each.

## MASTER YOUR TIME

Once you prioritize your tasks, you must determine how much time you should devote to each task. This will keep you focused on the task at hand. The following tools can help you manage your time more efficiently.

- Todoist
- TimeCamp
- Asana
- Clockify
- Trello
- Basecamp
- Remember the Milk

## CREATE AN EFFICIENT WORKSPACE

Take some time to build a workspace that works for you. Minimize distractions. Remove all consumer electronics that don't need to be there. Add a white noise machine if it helps filter out background sounds.

Every time you enter this space, tell yourself you will be a focused powerhouse of productivity. You can program your mind to focus better this way. You also create a space where it's easy to concentrate.

## STOP MULTITASKING

Multitasking robs your focus, ramps up stress and anxiety, and can lengthen the time and energy it takes to accomplish a task. As mentioned before, nothing good comes from trying to do several things simultaneously.

Remember, focus means to follow one course until success. Handle one thing at a time until it's completed, then move on to the next.

## SCHEDULE BREAKS

Concentrating is difficult, if not impossible when you are mentally and physically exhausted. Don't rely on yourself to remember to take breaks. Add them to your schedule.

Penciling them in means you have no other tasks to do at that time. Don't feel bad about taking a break. Remember, your mind and body need those short downtimes to reset so you can better focus the rest of the day.

## MEDITATE AND PRACTICE MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness requires you to exist in the present moment. You become mindful of your senses and how your breathing process takes place. This stress-relieving and calming practice clears the mental clutter and helps you focus.



Meditation does the same thing, and the process is similar. There are dozens of styles of meditation for you to choose from. Guided meditation is available through free videos on YouTube and other video-sharing sites. You can also use meditation and mindfulness apps for better focus and concentration.

Here are some examples:

- Insight Timer
- Mindfulness Coach
- Smiling Mind
- Healthy Minds Program
- UCLA Mindful

## **GET MOVING**

Studies show that 20 minutes of exercise daily can improve your concentration, focus, and memory, leading to better productivity.

Develop an exercise routine that can be done at any time and location, regardless of the weather. Ten minutes of exercise before work can start the day off right. Walking briskly during lunch will give you a boost for the afternoon. A quick lap up and down stairs will get your blood pumping. Taking care of your physical fitness improves your mind and body.

## **DEVELOP HEALTHY SLEEP HABITS**

Sleep deprivation is a common plague of modern life. It can negatively impact your ability to focus and cause several physical and mental health problems.

Create a bedtime routine that promotes restful sleep. Ensure your bedroom ambiance, lighting, temperature, and noise control are designed for relaxation. Avoid eating and drinking close to bedtime. Leave electronics in another room.

## **STAY HYDRATED**





Studies show when you're at peak hydration level, your memory, energy, mood, and attentiveness improve. As little as 1% dehydration can negatively impact your cognitive function by 5%.

You can consider yourself adequately hydrated if about a gallon of water moves through your system daily. The more active you are, the more hydration you need. Sip

filtered water throughout the day, and your ability to focus will benefit.

## EAT THESE FOODS

Some foods and beverages naturally make you mentally stronger. They boost your mental health, memory, and ability to concentrate. Consume more of the following for better mental focus.

- Blueberries
- Fatty Fish
- Green tea
- Coffee
- Eggs
- Tomatoes
- Avocados
- Nuts
- Pumpkin seeds
- Flax seeds
- Dark chocolate
- And leafy green vegetables

## MODULE 3 – IMPORTANT TAKEAWAYS

- Goals and a detailed action plan have been proven to direct your attention and improve focus.
- Goals get you to take action. Repeated actions tell your brain something is important, so it focuses on what you are doing.
- SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant to your values, and Time-bound.
- Working on goals boosts your self-esteem and self-confidence, which enhances your focus.
- For better focus, prioritize your tasks, get restful sleep, practice mindfulness and meditation, exercise, and stay hydrated.
- Natural focus boosters include blueberries, fatty fish, green tea, coffee, eggs, nuts, pumpkin seeds, flax seeds, dark chocolate, tomatoes, avocado, and leafy green vegetables.

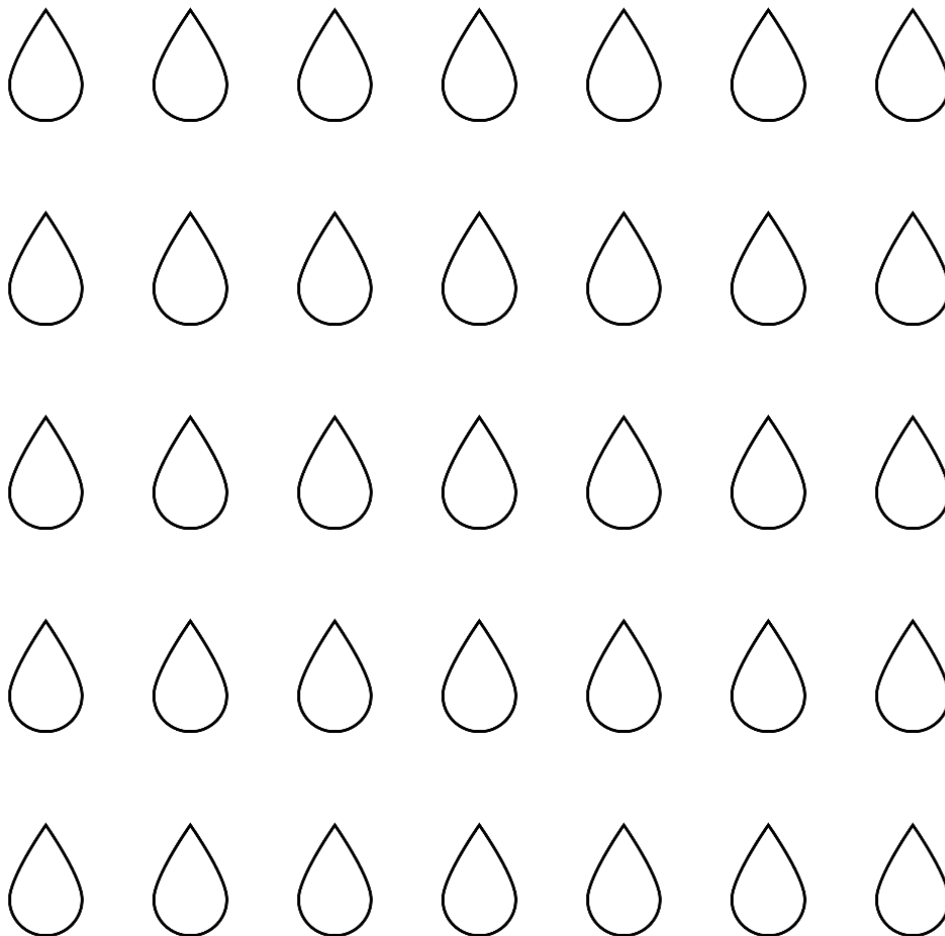
## MODULE 3 EXERCISES

Refer to the list of focus-boosting foods and drinks. Add at least three of them to your daily diet. Brainstorm a list of focus-boosting foods that you would be interested in adding to your diet:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.
- 17.
- 18.
- 19.
- 20.

Get a BPA-free water bottle and keep it filled with filtered water or green tea. Sip on it throughout the day.

To help you build a routine, track your first 5 weeks here. Circle or color a water drop each day you use your water bottle.



## **HOMEWORK**



- Start a daily mindfulness and meditation practice. Use an app or YouTube to help with guided relaxation.

## MODULE 4: APPLYING FOCUS TO ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS



So far, we've covered what focus is all about. We've talked about things that keep you from properly focusing and how to overcome those obstacles. We've also covered how goals can help you focus. This final module will examine how improved focus can help you achieve your goals.

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FOCUS

### AND GOAL ACHIEVEMENT

There's no denying that concentrated and directed focus moves you closer to achieving your goals. When you remove distractions, only work on the essential things, and have laser-like focus, nothing can stop you from achieving everything you desire.

### VISUALIZING EQUALS ACTION

Visualize the results or goals you want to achieve. Imagine watching yourself create the outcome you're looking for. See yourself effortlessly completing the next step on your path to goal achievement. Using all your senses, imagine you have achieved the goal and are living your new reality. This is visualization.

Visualization provides better focus because you mentally rehearse an activity, action, or behavior before you practice it. Visualization improves your focus and results because your brain responds the same way to thoughts as it does to reality.

Remember, your subconscious acts on whatever you tell it. It doesn't care whether the thought you give it is based on reality or is something you still need to achieve. Specific brain areas are activated when you physically take action or think about performing that action.

Neurologists have discovered that visualization prepares your body and mind to take action. This automatically improves your focus. You find it easier to concentrate on the task at hand because you have focused on doing it successfully in your mind's eye.

## **REPEATED CONSCIOUS ACTIONS BECOME HABITS**

In module one, you discovered that your consciousness only influences about 5% of the world you experience and can become easily overloaded. So, when you consciously repeat an action or behavior, your subconscious gets involved.

It assumes that since you are doing this action frequently, it must be important, and you will likely do it again. To keep your consciousness from being overwhelmed, it moves the action into the subconscious to handle it without thought. This is what is known as a habit.

This means you should create a schedule for achieving important goals. Try to work on it each day. Over time, intentionally following the action plan you created to achieve the goal will lead to automatic and unconscious concentration.

Your subconscious thinks working on the plan is important. The more frequently you work on your goal, the higher those actions are prioritized. This means your ability to focus becomes naturally better over time without you consciously attempting to improve your concentration.

That recipe for creating subconscious habits that help you focus better starts with consciously focusing on your goals. The result is that you are more productive, and your path to goal achievement is shortened.

## **STRATEGIES FOR STAYING FOCUSED ON LONG-TERM GOALS**

Staying focused on short-term goals is pretty straightforward. Looming deadlines, anticipating the reward, and other factors make focusing easier.

Maintaining focus on long-term goals takes more work. You need more time to achieve the goal, so there's more time for distractions and other factors to wreck your concentration.

Here are a few ways to keep your focus when tackling long-term goals.

### **MAKE THE EXPERIENCE ENJOYABLE**

When working on a long-term goal, make the experience as pleasurable as possible. The more you enjoy it, the more often you'll want to work on it. You'll begin to look forward to the process, making it easier to focus to get the desired results.

When you enjoy the process as much as the outcome, you better appreciate your efforts. Your self-esteem and confidence get a boost. You are less likely to give up if you face setbacks.

### **FOCUS ON THE PROCESS**

Long-term goals are called long-term for a reason. They are so large that you can only achieve them after a long period. With long-term goals, you must focus on more than just the big goal. You have to focus on the process.

If you've created an action plan for how you'll achieve your long-term goal, then you know what step you should be working on. Focus only on that step. Complete it before moving to the next. Completing daily, weekly, or monthly actions that build on each other will eventually lead to long-term success.

### **CREATE MILESTONES OF VICTORY**

It's easy to get discouraged when you know the goal you are after will take a while to achieve. This is why milestones are so helpful. They keep you motivated and show you how far you've come. They help





you maintain focus and give you reasons to celebrate.

When facing a large or long-term goal, set several milestones. If you want to save \$10,000, set your first milestone for \$100. When you reach it, celebrate the small win. Then, move on to the next milestone, which may be a savings of \$500 or \$1,000. Celebrate it and move on.

Apply this "small wins" idea to all of your long-term goals. It provides a constant dosage of short-term successes that motivate you to hit the next milestone.

## CASE STUDIES OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE MASTERED FOCUS

Doing something for the first time can be scary. You may look to others for motivation. Once you see they have accomplished similar goals, you start to believe it's possible for you.

The following high achievers benefited from laser-targeted concentration. Draw upon their stories for motivation when you find it difficult to focus.

### **Thomas Edison**

2,332. That's the number of patents earned by famous inventor Thomas Edison. Think of the focus required to create so much success. Edison famously stated that he failed 10,000 times before successfully inventing the incandescent lightbulb in 1879.

He concentrated on the process rather than the results. Had he focused on the results of his many failures, he may never have impacted the world in such an illuminating way.

### **Bethany Hamilton**

This 13-year-old girl lost most of her left arm to a shark attack while surfing. She could have been too scared to return to the water, but she wasn't. Bethany returned to the ocean and got back on her surfboard. She had to relearn how to surf because her mobility, balance, and self-confidence drastically changed after the attack.



Bethany didn't dwell on losing her arm; instead, she focused on the short-term steps needed to accomplish a long-term goal. She trained hard every day. Two years after she lost her arm, she took first place in the Explorer Women's Division of the NSSA National Championships.

### **Sir James Dyson**

The inventor of history's best-selling bagless vacuum cleaner had an unerring focus. He had to because his first 5,126 prototypes were failures. He didn't give up. He had a powerful picture in his mind of him succeeding. That visualization, along with perseverance and focus, eventually led to success.

### **Susan B. Anthony**

This lifelong activist for women's rights founded the American Equal Rights Association in 1866. Born in 1820, when women were viewed as second-class citizens, Susan's unwavering focus on equal rights for both women and men eventually earned women the right to vote in political elections. Her focus was so strong and affected so many people that it turned her vision into reality in 1919, 13 years after her death.

### **Paul J. Meyer**

Options for a boy born into poverty as an immigrant in the U.S. in 1928 were minimal. Nonetheless, with limited resources and opportunities, Paul J. Meyer earned the rank of Eagle Scout, the highest attainable level in the Boy Scouts of America.

He set physical fitness records in the U.S. Army. He became the youngest member to join the Million Dollar Roundtable (MDRT), a global association of the world's leading insurance and financial services professionals. He went on to found Success Motivation International and Leadership Management International to motivate people to reach their full potential.

Paul once said, "Productivity is never an accident. It is always the result of a commitment to excellence, intelligent planning, and focused effort."

### **J.K. Rowling**

The author of the Harry Potter book series had a challenging road to success. She became jobless about the same time her marriage fell apart. She was a single mother and, in her words, "as poor as it is possible to be in modern Britain without being homeless."

Her day-to-day distractions and responsibilities were countless. Yet she focused on writing a little bit every day. She would write down her thoughts while riding the subway. She wrote on notepads wherever and whenever possible, even if only for a few minutes. Her tireless focus on daily writing produced the best-selling book series ever.

## **APPLYING FOCUS TO ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS**

There is no end to the success stories of people who mastered the art of concentrated focus. They had a vision. That vision led to a goal. They developed a game plan and took consistent action. They achieved their goal.

Here are a few tips for taking smart and consistent action to create the desired result. You can use it any time you want to achieve a goal.

### **FOCUSED ACTION PLAN**

The first step to achieving anything significant is creating a clear, detailed outline of your goals. You must know what you want to accomplish and why, to move forward with success. Remember when writing this out that your goal needs to be SMART.

Once you know your goal, you can start working on your plan. Outline the actions you need to take to achieve your goal. Be clear about how and how often you'll measure your progress. Set milestones to help keep you motivated along the way.

When your plan is outlined, use a calendar or planner to schedule the daily, weekly, and monthly actions you need to take. Remember to schedule regular breaks. Make these actions a priority, not an afterthought.

Following this action plan will have you quickly moving towards achieving your dreams.

## MODULE 4 – IMPORTANT TAKEAWAYS

- Visualizing success gets the attention of your subconscious. Your conscious habits eventually move to the subconscious, which triggers focused action.
- Focusing on the process rather than the result is important when working on a long-term goal. Complete one small step at a time until you achieve the goal.
- You're more likely to succeed when you enjoy the process. Make your goal-chasing experience enjoyable.
- Long-term goals should have several small milestones. Achieving these shows how you are progressing and helps you build momentum.
- Successful people achieve big things by focusing on the daily work required and visualizing success.

## MODULE 4 EXERCISES

Take a few moments each day to visualize your goal.

<b>Your Most Important Goal:</b>	
<b>What will you feel like when you reach your goal?</b>	
<b>What will it look like when you reach your goal?</b>	
<b>Will anyone be with you when you reach your goal?</b>	
<b>How will other people react to you reaching your goal?</b>	
<b>Engage your senses, what do you see, smell, hear, feel or taste when you reach your goal?</b>	

Select a long-term goal you want to achieve and create an action plan for it.

Long Term Goal:	
Steps You Have to Take to Get There:	

## **HOMEWORK**



- Refer back to this module any time you need ideas for more focus.



## FINAL REMARKS



Some days, you'll find focusing comes easy. On other days, it will not. Rather than crossing your fingers and hoping for the best, use what you've learned to create concentrated focus.

You now have the tools and information you need. We gave you the truths behind common misconceptions related to focus. We shared how crucial focus is for achieving personal and professional success. We talked about how technology can help or hinder focus.

You know how to identify and minimize or eliminate distractions that threaten your focus. You learned some techniques for improving your focus to produce better results. You received tips for using focus to reach your goals and ways to stay focused on long-term goals. You also have an action plan for staying focused and on track to achieving any goal you set.

The only thing left is for you to take action.

Keep in mind success doesn't happen overnight. You must consciously work at staying focused on the tasks at hand. If you do it enough, your subconscious will pick it up and run with it. You will automatically pump out more focus and concentration because of these new subconscious habits.

Put this information into practice today. Show your brain you are serious about improving your ability to focus and that it's important to you.