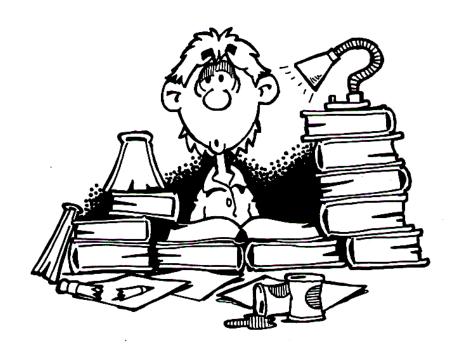


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MOTIVATION AND CONCENTRATION WORKSHOP

CONCENTRATION



Concentration Worksheet

Self - Assessment Exercise: Check the statements that apply to you: I am easily distracted when I study. My mind wonders when I read. I can't seem to find the time to study. I tend to procrastinate and put off studying to do something else. My mind goes blank on a test. If I do not like the instructor, I lose interest and do not pay attention. If the subject does not relate to my career goals, I lose interest. If an assignment is too difficult, I usually do not stick with it. I do not have a career goal, or a reason to study. It's hard for me to take notes and listen at the same time. Others: Possible causes for poor concentration: (Check the statements that apply to you). Internal Factors: Physical distractions - Irregular eating, sleeping, and exercise patterns, depression, anxiety, chronic pain or other related health and mental health issues. Emotion preoccupation or distraction - Personal issues or crisis ie. relationship break-up, job loss Excessive worry - Preoccupation and fear about future, failure, etc. Negative self-talk - Critical, comparative or perfectionist thinking Lack of career direction Lack of clarity or confusion regarding course work or expectations Other:

External Factors:	
People talking	
Noise distractions - TV, people talking, music, telephone	
Light too dim/bright	
☐ Temperature too high/low	
Time pressures	
Social distractions - invitations, family needs, time with friends	
☐ Discouraging words from others	
Lack of adequate materials or resources to complete the task	
Physical danger or threat	
Other:	
Spontaneously answer the following question:	
I am most focused and alert when I	

Strategies for Improving Concentration

Remember: Concentration strategies will require practice before they become habitual. Considerable change will likely occur within 4-6 weeks of practice.

Environment	 Find a comfortable and ventilated study environment Find a place that you use exclusively for study so that the environment becomes associated with concentration Make sure you have everything you need to study
Be Comfortable	- Make sure you have adequate light
	- Sit up straight to aid concentration
	- Avoid studying in bed, so it is associated with sleep
Reduce Distractions	- Take the phone off the hook, turn off the TV, etc.
	- Clear away clutter and distractions
	- Try not to get annoyed with distractions, that will make
	them more influential
"Park" Your Worries	- Create a "concern" notebook and every time your mind
	wanders to a worry, record your thoughts
	- Notice themes and take action to address your concerns
Schedule "Worry" Time	- Set aside a specific time each day to think about concerns
Schedule Your Time	- Estimate the number of hours you will need to study for each course each week; identify other fixed obligations - Create a schedule with adequate study time
Goal Setting	Goals should be:
	- Meaningful & Desired - Realistic & Achievable
	- Specific & Defined - Stated in the Positive
	- Internalized - In Writing
	- Measurable - Prioritized
Think Small	- Break study goals into small achievable tasks
Honour Your Body	- Eat healthy, get enough sleep and exercise frequently - Attend to any medical or health concerns
	- Allow for love, laughter, leisure and personal interest time
Take Breaks	- Take short breaks; concentration time is approx 30-90min
	- Take a walk, oxygenate your brain which helps alertness
Change is Good	- Every couple hours change the subject you're working on
	- You pay more attention when your mind is challenged with
	new information
Reward Yourself	- Give yourself a reward when you have completed a task
	- Keep the task small and reward meaningful
	- For major assignments choose special incentive rewards
Active Study Methods	- Ask yourself questions, dialogue with your material, quiz
	yourself, summarize, take sides of an argument, critique
Chart Energy Levels	- Note when you study best and schedule your more
	demanding or less interesting material for these times

Concentration Techniques:

If you find your mind wandering try some techniques to get your mind on the right track and paying attention to your study material.

"BE HERE NOW" TECHNIQUE:

- When you notice your thoughts wandering, say to yourself, "BE HERE NOW"
- Focus on your study or lecture and maintain your attention as long as possible. When your mind wanders again, repeat, "BE HERE NOW".
- Each time your mind wanders, gently bring it back by repeating "BE HERE NOW"
- Do not try to keep specific thoughts out of your mind.
 - The more you try not to think about something, the more you end up thinking about it
 - Simply recognize the thought, allow it to be and erase it from you mind by saying, "BE HERE NOW"
- It is normal to have to do this several hundred times per week
 - With practice, you will notice that your attention becomes more focused and your wandering thoughts become less frequent
- You may also use this technique to regain your concentration when you become distracted by an external distraction (ie. background noise)
 - Just say, "LET THEM BE OUT THERE", and redirect your focus to your study or lecture

PRACTICE RELAXATION AND MEDITATION:

- Learn CONTROLLED BREATHING
 - Put one hand on your upper chest and one on your stomach, the hand on your stomach moves out as you breathe in
 - Try breathing in for a count of 4 and out to a count of 4 for 4 min.
 - This technique optimizes oxygen intake, helping the brain to be alert

Learn PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

- Tense and relax each major muscle group (ie. feet, calves, thighs etc)
- Tense each muscle group for 5 seconds, relax for 10-15 seconds

Learn MEDITATION

- Imagery meditation involves actively visualizing scenes that are tranquil, safe and relaxing to you
- Choose scenes that are imagined/remembered and incorporate as many of your senses as possible (smell, taste, tactile, visual)

With practice, these techniques may be effectively implemented during a lecture, study period or exam.