

Effort Activity 2: Becoming Indistractable

Lecturer and consultant Nir Eyal has written a book, 'Indistractable', in which he explores why it is we find our lives controlled by tech giants thousands of miles away even when we have something important to do right in front of us. Often our time slips away in a haze of checking social media, sending text messages and looking at cat videos... and before we know it, we've spent two hours half-concentrating on something we could have finished in thirty minutes if we'd only been fully focussed.

We've found that for many students, the key to **increasing levels of effort** is **decreasing levels of distraction**.

Eyal suggests something we've found really useful. He argues we should recognise that discomfort (ie something feeling hard or boring) precedes distraction – so we need to be ready for it. We shouldn't sit down to do an hour's hard work without first admitting, "I'm going to feel uncomfortable and then I'll look for distractions. I need to be ready."

Once we've admitted this to ourselves, ***we can anticipate distraction***.

Where might it come from?

Eyal argues we need to keep our eyes on two places: the external triggers in the environment around us and the internal triggers we feel inside ourselves. Here are some examples:

External triggers	Internal triggers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Phone alerts for text messages, updates, likes, new videos...• The behaviour of those around you – people coming to chat, ask questions• TV in the background• Radio stations, music... <p>Others?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hunger• Thirst• Loneliness• Boredom• Insecurity• Negative self-talk ("What's the point? Why do I even have to do it? This task is stupid!") <p>Others?</p>
A possible solution:	A possible solution:
Use 'indistractable spaces'	Use 'indistractable routines'

Indistractable spaces

One of the solutions to our external triggers is to design indistractable spaces. These are spaces that are quiet and calm – spaces that promote concentration and feature none of the devices or people we associate with distraction.

Design or discover an indistractable space.

What might it look like? What might it contain? Where might it be? When might it be at its best for you?

Many of the most successful students we've worked with have 'airplane settings' as a feature of their indistractable space.

Indistractable routines

Eyal argues most internal triggers are sudden urges to do something else, and that these urges typically pass within ten minutes. Indistractable routines help with this.

Design a study period, with breaks, that will maximise your chances of concentrating for the full period.

How long would it be, and how would the breaks work? (Twenty minutes of work with a five minute break? Thirty minutes on, then fifteen off?) Think about chunking the session so that you move through phases. (Could you do fifteen minutes note-taking then a fifteen minute exam question? Or twenty minutes preparation for a ten-minute test?) Finally, consider the rewards that might come with successful completion. (A ten-minute check of social? A walk and a chat? A cup of coffee?)

Combining the Two

Once you've got your indistractable space and your indistractable routine, put the two together. Schedule a study session for some time in the next day or two, and try it out.

You never know – it might mean you get way more done in less time!

Design / describe your indistractable space below:

Design / describe your indistractable routine below: