

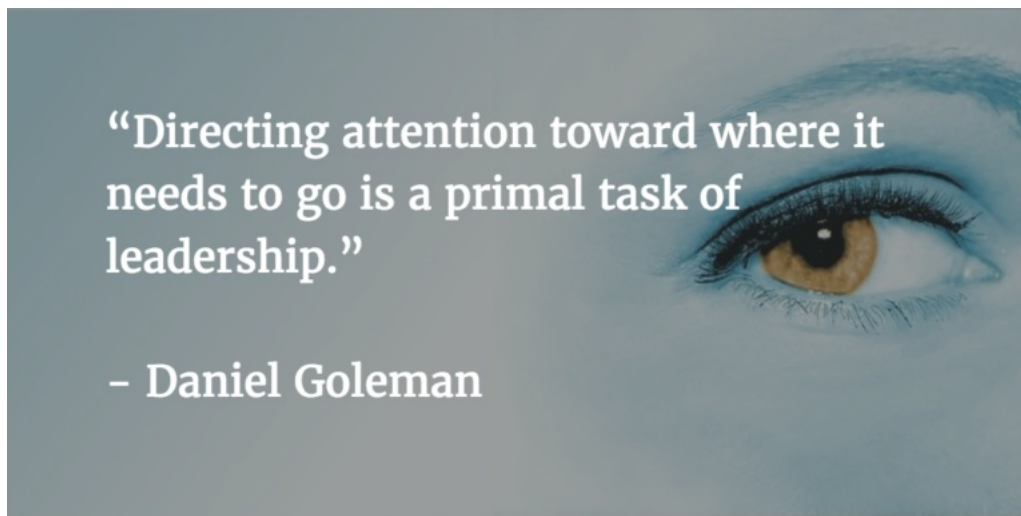
Focus Summary

 fourminutebooks.com/focus-summary

1-Sentence-Summary: *Focus shows you that attention is the thing that makes life worth living and helps you develop more of it to become focused in every area of life: work, relationships and your own attitude towards life and the planet.*

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



We're almost a decade into the rise of the smartphone empire and among many great benefits, we suffer one phenomenal loss as a result – our attention goes out the window.

If your life feels like a series of quick hits and dopamine fixes, it's time to put the smartphone on airplane mode for a while. Relying on these devices more than on our minds has left us with an attention span that's less than that of a goldfish. Now that's something to worry about.

Daniel Goleman aims to give you some of it back with *Focus*, and calls it the hidden driver of excellence. It is a book about mindfulness, willpower, leadership, empathy and success.

Here are 3 lessons to help you zone in on what's important:

1. Once your brain feels fried, just let your thoughts wander.
2. You can't do anything better for your willpower than work on something you love.
3. Think of distant problems as immediate to better plan for the future.

Do you feel focused? If not, we're about to fix it!

Lesson 1: When you just keep staring at the screen, let your mind wander.

The first thing you should know about is **open awareness**. All kinds of attention are valuable – not just the one that’s laser-sharp and focused. When you find your mind wandering a lot, that doesn’t necessarily mean it’s wandering in the wrong direction.

Sometimes taking a break is exactly what we need, because it makes our mind wander *towards* the thing we’ve been dying to figure out. For most of us downtime seems to be a luxury we can’t afford, but in reality, we can’t afford *not* to relax, because when you keep staring at the screen and can’t seem to make any sense of what’s in front of you, you’ll only get frustrated and perform even worse.

Especially if your work requires intense focus, which is true for engineers, software developers, writers and mathematicians, for example, it’s important to let your mind roam freely and practice “mindlessness” sometimes. For example, when you take a walk outside and leave your work at your desk, your subconscious starts to come up with creative ideas based on you being openly aware of your surroundings.

Studies have found that we can generate up to 40% more original ideas when letting our minds rest.

Lesson 2: The best way to improve your willpower is to do something you love.

But sometimes you really do need to work on something for several hours in a focused manner, ideally in the state of flow. What you need to make that happen is willpower. You might know that nutrition, sleep and exercise are important determinants of how much willpower you can muster, but Daniel Goleman discovered one I bet you haven’t heard about: **doing work you love**.

Studies have recently found that the psychological component of willpower is a lot bigger than we thought, meaning most of it actually comes from your mind, not your body. The reason your willpower gets stronger if you do something you love then, is that **if your work reflects your goals, it becomes effortless**.

Late nights, confronting big obstacles and the patience you need until you see it through come a lot easier when you’re 100% convinced that what you’re doing is the exact right thing for you to do.

As an example Goleman mentions George Lucas, who, when creating the original Star Wars, went rogue and split from his production company – an incredibly difficult move at the time – because he was afraid his creative vision would be compromised. In the end, because he believed in his idea, he did everything that was necessary to make it a success.

Lesson 3: Imagine distant problems as immediate to make better long-term decisions.

I bet you have a dream. A crazy one. Something no one really cares about, but you. And even before you knew that working on it might boost your willpower, I'm sure you wanted to. But you didn't.

It's the first 10 pages of your manuscript that are sitting inside your desk drawer since 2012. The scaffold that collects dust in your attic. The high school reunion party you never threw. These things make life worth living, and are what we all want to accomplish in that short time we're here – yet we keep procrastinating on them, because they don't have deadlines.

The regret of having had a shitty life is too far away to cause you to panic now, because it'll only come when you're too old to change it.

But Goleman says if you imagine these problems as serious, immediate threats (for example climate change, same thing) right now, then you can stop choosing what makes you happy in the short-term, but doesn't solve the problem.

Traffic jams are often solved by building new highways, but all that does is create more room for traffic jams and therefore, actually promotes them. Focus on the larger context and imagine the consequences of long-term issues as happening *tomorrow*, not 50 years from now, and you'll make much better decisions in the here and now.

Focus Review

Focus feels like an encompassing instruction manual for attention. It really covers most of the relevant bases where most other books only address specific areas and issues, like willpower or leadership. The summary on Blinkist is very long and comprehensive, I'd definitely go for it before checking out the full book, which of course has plenty more examples and relevant case studies.

[Read full summary on Blinkist](#)

[Get the book on Amazon](#)

[Learn more about the author](#)

What else can you learn from the blinks?

- Why selective attention is the key to high performance
- The difference between your bottom-up and top-down minds
- What the advantages of having ADHD are
- The two types of empathy and how to build them
- Why leaders must be attention directors

- What happens when leaders don't care more about those they lead than themselves
- How leaders successfully navigate the larger context they live in
- Why meditation can help you build meta-awareness
- What optimists do better than the rest of the world

Who would I recommend the Focus summary to?

The 13 year old, who just got her first smartphone, the 62 year old community leader with a lot of pressure to perform well, and anyone who thinks they can always start working on that novel tomorrow.