

Week 7 Presentation: The Spotlight of Visual Attention (Chapter 6)

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Introduction:

We cannot process everything in our visual field simultaneously. Attention is the mechanism that selects relevant information for processing while filtering out the rest. This presentation focuses on the bottleneck of attention, exploring phenomena like inattention blindness, change blindness, and the difference between overt (looking at) and covert (attending to) attention.

Brainstorming Questions:

1. **The Tummy Rub Challenge:** Try patting your head and rubbing your tummy at the same time. Difficult? Use this physical struggle to explain to a child why “multitasking” is actually a myth. Explain that your brain is just a very fast “spotlight” switching back and forth, not a big floodlight that sees everything at once.
2. **The “Autopilot” Drive:** Recall a time you walked or drove somewhere and arrived without remembering the journey. Tell, as if you were talking to, your grandma this story to explain “inattention blindness”—how her eyes can be “recording” like a camera, but if her brain’s “operator” is daydreaming, she doesn’t essentially “see” anything.
3. **The Magician’s Trick:** Perform (or describe) a simple coin trick for a child. Explain that you fooled them not by being fast, but by distracting their “brain’s spotlight.” Teach them that if they look exactly where you want them to, they miss everything else, proving we really only see a tiny bit of the world at a time.

Recommended Readings:

- Zeki, S. (1999). *Inner vision: An exploration of art and the brain*. Oxford University Press.

- Wertheimer, M. (1938). Laws of organization in perceptual forms. In W. D. Ellis (Ed.), *A source book of Gestalt psychology* (pp. 71-88). Harcourt, Brace.