
Find Your Focus Zone - Lucy Jo Palladino (Quotations)

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This book has some advice for increasing focus. I didn't apply all of them and I doubt if they can really make such a difference *in the long term* but certainly they should be in one's arsenal of mental/psychological tools. At least to recommend them to others.

Most of the *theory* behind the book is about adrenaline and when to increase/decrease it to change the focus for the task at hand. This idea seems a bit simplistic, to be honest.

I remember going to see my adviser for his review of the first draft of my master's thesis. "Lucy Jo," he said, "Your writing is so passionate." I beamed, but it was a short-lived moment of glory. "Scientific writing," he continued in a monotone voice, "is dispassionate." (page 8)

[W]hen it comes to staying focused, elite athletes face two distinct challenges: long, boring hours of practice; and high-stakes, high-pressure events. (page 10)

The great psychologist Carl Jung once said, "If there is anything we wish to change in the child, we should first examine it and see whether it is not something that could better be changed in ourselves." (page 13)

Additional resources are available at <http://www.yourfocuszone.com>. (page 15)

Attention is poor when you are either understimulated or overstimulated. (page 17)

Paying attention in a relaxed-alert state is practically effortless. (page 19)

Like Olympic athletes who practice psychological skills, you can stay in your focus zone by choice. (page 22)

In sports psychology, the zone for each sport is determined by its ratio of physical strength to mental skill. (page 23)

Tennis or golf demands great concentration, so the optimal adrenaline level is much lower. (page 24)

If you're underpowered, multitasking is good because an additional activity adds stimulation and gets you into your focus zone. (page 26)

You may not be able to talk, e-mail, and instant-message at the same time, but your child probably can. (page 28)

He's got too much, not too little adrenaline pumping. His parents' threat just makes him pump even more and pushes him farther out of his focus zone. Instead of getting motivated, the child gets overwhelmed. (page 29)

At one extreme, they cause tension, so you feel worried and anxious. At the other, they rob you of the joy of play, so you also feel bored and underpowered. (page 30)

When he faces the novelty of a new project or a threat like a computer virus, his adrenaline surges and kicks him into his focus zone. (page 32)

His high level of adrenaline narrows his attention. (page 33)

I use the term “too hyperfocused” because being hyperfocused is a useful skill and a desirable state. But an overstimulated state of being too hyperfocused is more like getting super glued stuck. (page 34)

In a number of ways, being too hyperfocused looks like flow: total concentration, deep involvement, a sense of challenge, and losing track of time. But the critical difference is the presence of tension in a state of extreme hyperfocus. (page 34)

[W]hen you’re in a state of flow or peak performance, you remain relaxed. (page 34)

On the other hand, flow or peak performance is the pinnacle of your focus zone, a relaxed-alert state. Attention flows easily because just the right amount of adrenaline is pumping. Csikszentmihalyi describes it as a calm state of balance and joy, characterized by openness, flexibility, and freedom of thought. (page 34)

Without meaning to, Joe scowls at his family so that they’ll leave him alone. This is a sign that he’s pumping too much adrenaline and is too hyperfocused. (page 35)

A child who at any moment might feel ignored by the most important man in her life has to build stronger-than-average defenses. Becky's budding self-esteem takes a hit with each flash of unintentional rejection from her dad. (page 39)

A two-year-old should be able to sustain attention for at least six minutes, and a child entering kindergarten should be able to concentrate for at least fifteen minutes. (page 41)

Normal attention span is the amount of time you can sustain attention on a thought or activity you have freely selected. (page 42)

When you finally turned the TV off, did you feel listless or easily annoyed? Next time someone in your house has settled in for several hours of nonstop television or video games, watch his mood when he gets up. Is he a little crankier than usual? (page 44)

In *When Old Technologies Were New*, Carolyn Marvin observed that when the telephone was first introduced, people wanted to publish times next to their phone numbers "advising that they receive calls only at certain hours." (page 45)

Too much information and too many interruptions deplete brain chemicals that take time and rest to replenish. (page 46)

Like the little donkey, you may continue to work hard. But without replenishment, you'll pay the price: cognitive overload and a harmful state of overarousal. (page 46)

[T]olerance occurs at the receptor site—the tiny gap between the neurons in the brain where connections called synapses take place. Biologists call this process “down-regulation.” The more a receptor cell for the orienting response is stimulated, the less responsive it gets. (page 49)

You need to be able to make reasonable, informed decisions. But when the brain habituates to being hyper, it quits trying to tell you what the correct price is. (page 50)

Virtual worlds make our own world seem dull by comparison. (page 51)

You aren’t sitting in quiet contemplation, spending time in nature, or connecting with someone you love. These activities generate serotonin, the brain chemical linked to a sense of well-being that keeps your adrenaline brain chemicals in check. (page 55)

Multitasking gives you a boost of dopamine that makes you feel so alert and alive that it seems as if you’re doing more in less time, even if you’re not. (page 57)

[Y]ou cannot change the way you feel, you can change the way you think, and that changes the way you feel. (page 60)

If you feel shamed or nagged by your inner voice, that’s not your observer self. (page 64)

Invite him in; check the clock; decide to take ten minutes to talk with him and recharge; and then, if he’s not leaving, tell him you’ve got to get back to work and stand up to signal that it’s time for him to leave. (page 66)

Your adrenaline score is your key to gauge how slow or hyper you feel and, if necessary, guide yourself back into the relaxed-alert state of your focus zone. (page 66)

[I]f you need to think about your problems, staying busy to avoid them works against you, not for you. (page 73)

With every phone call she asked herself, “What am I not doing? What don’t I want to face?” Her phone calls got shorter. (page 73)

“What am I not doing now? ... If I wasn’t doing this, could I spend the time reviewing my finances?” (page 73)

[W]e seek instant relief when we sense underlying anxiety. Instant is our way of life, and avoidance is instant. (page 74)

If you had an instant solution to the problem, why would you feel anxious about it? (page 74)

Change-of-state practices kept him focused on the low-stim tasks he was getting graded (page 75)

1. Look at the upper left-hand corner and inhale for the count of 4.
 2. Move your gaze to the upper right-hand corner and hold your breath for a count of 4.
 3. Move your gaze to the lower right-hand corner and exhale for a count of 4.
 4. Move your gaze to the lower left-hand corner, silently say the words, “Relax, relax, smile,” and do just that. (page 76)
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But it also reminds you that you have the power to start and stop your break. (page 78)

Choose a task you like as the first thing to do when you get back. Bring a treat back with you, like a cup of tea or a pack of mints. Plan your next break right away to give yourself something to look forward to. (page 79)

For low-stim jobs, you'll want to break more often. You can add mini-breaks as you need them, especially in the late afternoon. Try stretching your muscles, doing isometrics, splashing water on your face, opening a window, or turning on more lights. (page 80)

What's essential is that your power break is deliberate, strategic, and time-limited. High or Low Stim? (page 80)

If the work you're doing is dull—repetitive data entry, technical report writing—choose a high-stim break. Do (page 80)

If the work you're doing is nerve-racking—conflict resolution or air traffic control, for instance—choose a low-stim break to soothe and relax yourself. If (page 80)

At around two o'clock each afternoon, the body's circadian rhythm—its twenty-four-hour internal clock—hits a natural low. (page 81)

You deliberately choose to multitask to increase your alertness, recognizing that you're less efficient. (page 83)

When you open your e-mail program to check for incoming messages, are you taking a quick break or are you multitasking? Strictly speaking, you're taking a break, even though it's usually referred to as multitasking. (page 84)

Executives are becoming more aware of the dollar cost of the small, rude signals that multitasking can send. (page 86)

Take a moment to tell those around you what you're doing and why. (page 86)

Paper and pencil are great tools for improving your concentration. (page 87)

Genius solo artists—Itzhak Perlman on violin, James Galway on flute. (page 90) Wed Jan 21 21:42:39 EET 2015

When your child baits you into an argument about homework, the two of you fight and also ignore the homework that's not getting done. (page 92)

In 1978, only about 5 percent of Americans thought of themselves as chronic procrastinators; now it's 26 percent. (page 94)

1. Fear of Failure—If you don't do it, you won't get judged. 2. Fear of Success—If you do it, you'll be expected to produce more. 3. Fear of Being Controlled—By not doing it, you're saying, "You can't make me." (page 94)

Aim for progress, not perfection. (page 95)

Break your job into specific steps. Write out a simple outline or plan. Include breaks and rewards after each step. If you're stuck, cut that step in two. No self-criticism; only encouragement. (page 96)

Sensing that the company was losing interest in one of its outside consultants, Greg put off implementing the consultant's recommendations. (page 98)

Using procrastination as a habit to filter out unimportant tasks can be risky, though, especially if you procrastinate outside the office too. (page 98)

How do you change a pattern if its pathway has been grooved into your brain? Psychologists use a method called "corrective emotional experience." (page 101)

[W]orked with a tennis player who had lost a regional title because he had missed a backhand shot under pressure. To correct his backhand error, in his mind he returned to that critical moment many times and practiced what it would have felt like to have made the shot. (page 103)

The feelings you have are real, just as the sound of a fire alarm is real, even if there is no fire. (page 107)

A good plan has three qualities: it is (1) doable, (2) specific, and (3) positive. Here's a simple test to see if you have a good plan: when you look at it, which do you feel—burdened or hopeful? (page 107)

In the realm of the subconscious mind, forbidden fruit tastes sweet. (page 111)

I suggested to Karen that instead of arguing with these persistent, self-recriminating thoughts, she thank her subconscious mind for having reminded her that she could be better prepared. (page 114)

When you're angry, you feel like your focus is sharp. In reality, your focus is narrow and you're likely to miss important cues, particularly warning signs that you're hurting yourself or others. (page 115)

We forget that we have the right to turn off our ringers without guilt. Having the power of technology doesn't mean we have to use it all the time. (page 124)

A mom with FOMO fears that other eight-year-olds have an advantage her child does not. (page 126)

Nature manages to be both organized and creative. —ANONYMOUS (page 129)

Decide to run only the races you choose, the ones that matter the most to you. (page 132)

People know only what you tell them about yourself. They may not know who you really are, so their expectations may not match your own path. (page 136)

What might have motivated a legend like Bill Gates to begin to transition from his role at Microsoft and become the head of a foundation to serve those in need? Most likely, he rose to answer an inner calling at a new stage in his life. (page 137)

I was talking with a champion skeet shooter who reminded me of Dr. Unestahl's principle that winning is more likely when it is not your primary goal. (page 138)

When he's up, he doesn't count hits or misses to track his standing in the event. He focuses only on what he can control—his aim for the shot he is about to take. (page 138)

When you take an exam, your goal is to use every valuable moment to focus on answering questions and solving problems. The moment you start to wonder how the person next to you is doing, what your grade is going to be, or if everyone else is better prepared than you are, you're throwing good attention away. (page 139)

The ancient Taoist Chuangtzu wrote wistfully about an archer who has all his skill until he shoots for a prize of gold. The archer then sees two targets. His skill has not changed, but the prize divides him. He thinks more of winning than of shooting. And the need to win drains him of power. (page 142)

Remember that the art of establishing a goal is to set it up in such a way that each task and its reward develop an irresistible power to pull you forward. (page 144)

Specific is terrific. (page 144)

Students who get either A's or F's because they strive for perfection in the classes they like, but can't sustain the effort for the classes they don't like. (page 145)

In nature, bendable is dependable. (page 145)

Picture a sturdy, well-rooted, tall tree in a storm that bends as much as it needs to, so it does not break. (page 146)

When you have to make a tough decision, ask yourself this question: "At the moment of my death, if I look back to this moment, what do I want to remember that I decided to do right now?" (page 146)

"If you live each day as if it were your last, some day you'll most certainly be right." (page 147)

"If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?" (page 147)

"It's no use reminding yourself daily that you are mortal; it will be brought home to you soon enough." (page 148)

The upside of this trait is that he thinks of things no one else thinks of; the downside is that often he's thinking of them while everyone else is thinking or talking about something else. (page 152)

[L]ittle chores are avoidance only if they're all you do. If you use them as a warm-up, you're skillfully using a psychological tool. Nothing succeeds like success. (page 153)

Concise verbs that are specific to what you're doing are powerful self-directions, because by naming the action, your brain has already begun to take you there. For example: If you're... Say... Drafting a technical report "Think, write, think, write, think, write." Creating a spreadsheet "Keep it straight; be accurate." Meeting a future deadline "Pick up the pace; keep moving." (page 156)

Interestingly, only names of friends and relatives who subjects said shared their goals or supported them in their goals resulted in improved scores. Names of those who regarded the subjects' goals as unimportant had the opposite result. (page 159)

What if they made a CD of the soundtrack of his favorite video game? Then when the alarm went off, Nick would instantly be connected with the promise of playing an extra ten minutes if he got up right away. (page 167)

"We expect you to be perfect, and if you're not, you're a loser. Feel bad about it." (page 169)

But the truth is that if you can't make a mistake, you can't make anything. (page 169)

Your comfort zone is not the same as your focus zone. In fact, sometimes you need to leave your comfort zone to find your focus zone. (page 170)

“You’re a winner because you’re prioritizing. It’s what good decision makers do.” (page 171)

It is now widely recognized that mental rehearsal can help you control both your emotions and your focus when you perform, especially when you need to stay cool under pressure. (page 172)

Current research shows a strong link between lack of sleep and attention deficit disorder (ADD). (page 177)

Results showed that frequent small amounts of daytime caffeine maintained alertness better than a large morning dose comparable to a big cup of coffee when you first wake up. (page 182)

We do not yet know the effects on our brains of electronic flicker, the pulses of light that fire rapidly from the video screen to the brain. (page 183)

Meditation is a time-honored and powerful practice to improve daily focus. However, you need to find what works for you. (page 185)

[M]any people keep themselves overly busy mainly to avoid unpleasant emotions such as guilt, resentment, or anxiety. (page 185)

You imitate a relaxed person until you become one. (page 187)

[T]urns out that when we feel gratitude we promote serotonin, which slows down the cascade of stress chemicals. (page 188)

If you want to promote focus in your life, choose friends who value it, too. (page 190)

In other words, people will risk more to avoid a loss than to realize a gain. (page 193)

We aren't certain what's of value and what's not. So we put the decision off, even if we wind up losing more. (page 194)

Dr. Mark's study showed something else: not all interruptions are bad. Often the call or e-mail that disrupted a worker's concentration brought exactly the information that the worker needed. (page 198)

When you're interrupted or you've got too many irons in the fire, all your "unfinished orders" remain at some level of active mode in your brain. As David Allen, author of *Getting Things Done*, observes, we're conditioning our brains to neither entirely remember (page 205)

In the words of an ancient Okinawan proverb, "He who chases around many rabbits ends hungry." (page 211)

It's not finished because it's perfect. It's finished because it's Saturday night at eleven-thirty. (page 218)

The fates lead him who will. He who won't, they drag. —JOSEPH CAMPBELL, PARAPHRASING THE ROMAN PHILOSOPHER SENECA (page 219)

[I]t's no surprise that people with ADD qualities (which you'll read about in Chapter 12) are drawn to becoming entrepreneurs. (page 222)

It is the adaptation to the self that is important, not the adaptation to the average. —OTTO RANK (page 229)

"Daddy, your BlackBerry is like my Game Boy. When is it time for you to put it away?" (page 250)

"understanding and managing attention is now the single most important determinant of business success." (page 272)

we are moving from an economy of things to an economy of attention. (page 272)