



Dopamine, Detoxing, Battling Brain Melt and Deafening Attention

Key Takeaways

- 1 The Attention Army Has a Hell Lot of Inventory
- 2 We Live in a State of Continuous Partial Attention
- 3 Experience Determines Quality of Life, Attention Determines Experience
- 4 Focus Is Prolonged Attention & Flow Is the State That Occurs with Prolonged Focus
- 5 Distraction Means We Constantly Break the Flow Cycle
- 6 The Rarity & Value of Deep Work Are Increasing Simultaneously
- 7 Annihilating Distraction Is Key to Paying Attention
- 8 Cultivating a Monk-Like Quality of Mind for High Performance
- 9 Developing a Ferocious Commitment to Unitasking
- 10 Developing Monk Like Impulse Control

Quote:

“ Attention is like energy in that without it no work can be done, and in doing work is dissipated. We create ourselves by how we use this energy. Memories, thoughts and feelings are all shaped by how we use it. And it is an energy under control, to do with as we please; hence attention is our most important tool in the task of improving the quality of experience ”

— *Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*

Diagnostic N/A

Exercise

1. Distraction Management Audit

2. Interruption Log

3. Schedule a Dopamine Fast

See next page for details

Exercise

1. The Distraction Management Audit

What are the five biggest sources of distraction in your life?

1

2

3

4

5

What steps could you take to eliminate or minimize them?

Exercise

2. Interruption Log

We've covered self-distraction—the bigger issue are interruptions.

From today, start making a note every time you're interrupted.

Note:

- The source of the interruption (e.g., coworker, phone, outside noise) and the severity of the interruption
- An estimate of how much it has damaged your attention.

The Two Forms of Distraction :

Self-Imposed Distraction

- Eliminate All Self-Imposed Distraction.

Externally Imposed (Interruptions):

- Barricade Your Attention by Eliminating All Disruption.

Exercise

3. Schedule a Dopamine Fast

The Fully Fledged Dopamine Fast:

Starting Point — Removal of Screens.

1. Screens (Phone, Computer, TV, Smartwatch)
2. Substances
3. Stimulating Foods
4. Coffee or Tea
5. Sexual Activity
6. Talking
7. Reading
8. Music
9. Food

End point — Sitting Alone in Silence.

Glossary

Nomophobia: Fear of being without a mobile phone. ~50% of young adults

Attention: Attention is the behavioral and cognitive process of selectively concentrating on a discrete aspect of information while ignoring other perceivable information.

Distraction: Distraction occurs when we shift our attention to other information we're perceiving, that we do not want to be paying attention to.

The Deep Work Hypothesis: The ability to perform deep work is becoming increasingly rare at exactly the same time it is becoming increasingly valuable in our economy. As a consequence, the few who cultivate this skill, and then make it the core of their working life, will thrive.

Becoming Sensitive to Stimulation: When stimulation sensitivity is high, doing simple things like reading or working on hard problems for long periods of time becomes highly engaging because we've switched the bar for boredom. These simple, low-engagement tasks are now highly engaging.

Attention Residue: Attention residue is when thoughts about a task persist and intrude while performing another task.

Notes

🔗 Lesson Resources

1. Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience,
Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi,
2. Deep Work,
By Cal Newport
3. The Organized Mind,
by Daniel Levitin
4. The Distracted Mind,
by Adam Gazzaley and Larry D. Rosen
5. Deep Work (Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World),
By Cal Newport
6. Mindfulness training and reductions in teacher stress and burnout: Results from two randomized, waitlist-control field trials, Jha, A., et al, 2013
7. Focus on Keeping Cognitive Load Low at All Times:
 - Your mind is made for having ideas, not for holding ideas. Your head is a crappy office
 - Get it out of your head and onto paper or into your task management platform –no matter how small
 - Never, ever, ever attempt to hold anything in your mind
8. Make This a Habit – Always Focus on Unitasking...
 - When in the gym—work out and work out only, phone on flight mode
 - When speaking to someone—speak to them only, phone off
 - When working, work only—eliminate all other distractions
 - When eating—just eat, don't try to squeeze in extra work, too
 - When getting ready to work—just get ready, don't start responding to emails, too
9. Maximize Time Spent Without Stimulation:
 - Arrive early for events and sit quietly
 - Be with yourself while your dinner guest goes to the bathroom
 - Wait in line without checking your phone
 - Spend an evening sitting looking at a wall instead of watching TV
 - Fast from eating, speaking, sexual activity
 - Cut out unintentional information consumption; streaming, news, social media
 - Spend time in sensory deprivation chambers