

MOTIVATION AND CONCENTRATION WORKSHOP

CONCENTRATION



Concentration Worksheet

Self - Assessment Exercise:

Check the statements that apply to you:

- I am easily distracted when I study.
- My mind wanders when I read.
- I can't seem to find the time to study.
- I tend to procrastinate and put off studying to do something else.
- My mind goes blank on a test.
- If I do not like the instructor, I lose interest and do not pay attention.
- If the subject does not relate to my career goals, I lose interest.
- If an assignment is too difficult, I usually do not stick with it.
- I do not have a career goal, or a reason to study.
- It's hard for me to take notes and listen at the same time.
- Others:

Possible causes for poor concentration:

(Check the statements that apply to you).

Internal Factors:

- Physical distractions - Irregular eating, sleeping, and exercise patterns, depression, anxiety, chronic pain or other related health and mental health issues.
- Emotion preoccupation or distraction - Personal issues or crisis
ie. relationship break-up, job loss
- Excessive worry - Preoccupation and fear about future, failure, etc.
- Negative self-talk - Critical, comparative or perfectionist thinking
- Lack of career direction
- Lack of clarity or confusion regarding course work or expectations
- Other:

External Factors:

- People talking
- Noise distractions - TV, people talking, music, telephone
- Light too dim/bright
- Temperature too high/low
- Time pressures
- Social distractions - invitations, family needs, time with friends
- Discouraging words from others
- Lack of adequate materials or resources to complete the task
- Physical danger or threat
- Other:

Spontaneously answer the following question:

I am most focused and alert when I

Strategies for Improving Concentration

Remember: Concentration strategies will require practice before they become habitual. Considerable change will likely occur within 4-6 weeks of practice.

Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Find a comfortable and ventilated study environment - Find a place that you use exclusively for study so that the environment becomes associated with concentration - Make sure you have everything you need to study
Be Comfortable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make sure you have adequate light - Sit up straight to aid concentration - Avoid studying in bed, so it is associated with sleep
Reduce Distractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take the phone off the hook, turn off the TV, etc. - Clear away clutter and distractions - Try not to get annoyed with distractions, that will make them more influential
"Park" Your Worries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create a "concern" notebook and every time your mind wanders to a worry, record your thoughts - Notice themes and take action to address your concerns
Schedule "Worry" Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set aside a specific time each day to think about concerns
Schedule Your Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Estimate the number of hours you will need to study for each course each week; identify other fixed obligations - Create a schedule with adequate study time
Goal Setting	<p>Goals should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meaningful & Desired - Specific & Defined - Internalized - Measurable - Realistic & Achievable - Stated in the Positive - In Writing - Prioritized
Think Small	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Break study goals into small achievable tasks
Honour Your Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Eat healthy, get enough sleep and exercise frequently - Attend to any medical or health concerns - Allow for love, laughter, leisure and personal interest time
Take Breaks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take short breaks; concentration time is approx 30-90min - Take a walk, oxygenate your brain which helps alertness
Change is Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Every couple hours change the subject you're working on - You pay more attention when your mind is challenged with new information
Reward Yourself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give yourself a reward when you have completed a task - Keep the task small and reward meaningful - For major assignments choose special incentive rewards
Active Study Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask yourself questions, dialogue with your material, quiz yourself, summarize, take sides of an argument, critique
Chart Energy Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note when you study best and schedule your more demanding or less interesting material for these times

Concentration Techniques:

If you find your mind wandering try some techniques to get your mind on the right track and paying attention to your study material.

"BE HERE NOW" TECHNIQUE:

- When you notice your thoughts wandering, say to yourself, "**BE HERE NOW**"
- Focus on your study or lecture and maintain your attention as long as possible. When your mind wanders again, repeat, "**BE HERE NOW**".
- Each time your mind wanders, gently bring it back by repeating "**BE HERE NOW**"
- Do not try to keep specific thoughts out of your mind.
 - The more you try not to think about something, the more you end up thinking about it
 - Simply recognize the thought, allow it to be and erase it from you mind by saying, "**BE HERE NOW**"
- It is normal to have to do this several hundred times per week
 - With practice, you will notice that your attention becomes more focused and your wandering thoughts become less frequent
- You may also use this technique to regain your concentration when you become distracted by an external distraction (ie. background noise)
 - Just say, "**LET THEM BE OUT THERE**", and redirect your focus to your study or lecture

PRACTICE RELAXATION AND MEDITATION:

- Learn **CONTROLLED BREATHING**
 - Put one hand on your upper chest and one on your stomach, the hand on your stomach moves out as you breathe in
 - Try breathing in for a count of 4 and out to a count of 4 for 4 min.
 - This technique optimizes oxygen intake, helping the brain to be alert
- Learn **PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION**
 - Tense and relax each major muscle group (ie. feet, calves, thighs etc)
 - Tense each muscle group for 5 seconds, relax for 10-15 seconds
- Learn **MEDITATION**
 - Imagery meditation involves actively visualizing scenes that are tranquil, safe and relaxing to you
 - Choose scenes that are imagined/remembered and incorporate as many of your senses as possible (smell, taste, tactile, visual)

With practice, these techniques may be effectively implemented during a lecture, study period or exam.