



Focus a Key to Success

by JM Capalar

As future Paulinian Abogados we live in a busy loop. We juggle between family, business, work, health, financial issues, relationships, and of course "Law School". While writing this article, I am already contemplating, "naks ang daming time", where in fact prelims are just a week away.

We strive to keep everything balanced by doing a lot, but the fact remains that we rarely get things done. It's like treading water where you try to tick off a list of tasks from your to-do list (that is if you have one). If you will analyze the situation, the actual issue here is not time but rather our "FOCUS" and "ENERGY." Guilty as charged! I, myself have a short attention span.

You eat, sleep, wake up and repeat almost 90% of similar tasks every day. But the harsh reality is that it doesn't lead you anywhere productive. Especially, when it comes to our readings in preparation for our weekend classes in law school. Our favorite lines, "kulang ang time", "our workload is heavy", etc.... the list of our excuses will go on and on. With all these commotions, one remains distracted, kicks the can down the road, and starts procrastinating.

If you lack focus or don't have sufficient energy, then no amount of time would be sufficient for you. Without proper focus and energy, you will never learn to spend time effectively.

What is Focus?

Lifehack.org defined focus as the ability to direct our attention towards one task in an all-in-dulgent manner, concentrating on the aspects related to or the results. Merriam-Webster defines focus as, "a point of concentration". Focus is a key pillar in life, as it is the driving force that defines a person's capacity.

To focus, some people require complete silence and a clutter-free workspace or study area. Some need music or loud TV, while others need personal mementos in their desks to get the right mindset. I personally love instrumental music as my background and a scented candle to help me focus.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to creating a productive work and/or study environment. You must figure out what works best for you and create that space, even if you must spend a little extra and some effort (para sa ekonomiya at para sa pangarap!!!).

However, these definitions are just an aspect of it, but it isn't the whole picture of what focus is.

So, what is focus?

Leon Ho, Founder of Lifehack, linked focus to productivity and intelligence. According to Ho, “Productivity isn’t something that happens by chance, focus is the heart of productivity”. Getting everything, you need and want to do takes forethought and planning, and a steady source of drive and focus.

Productivity refers to achieving the best outcome in the shortest time possible. You can expand your energy more efficiently when you have a strong focus. It’s more than just doing more in less time. It’s all about doing more, smarter, and better, regardless of time. Superior attention helps you get a decent outcome no matter how much or little time you have. That is why high achievers can harvest benefits even when time is limited.

When your focus is split between multiple things, it doesn’t concentrate on anything. You may believe that you are concentrating on numerous things simultaneously, but this is not the case.

According to Ho, “focus connotes intelligence”. Intelligence is the ability to interpret and apply information to manipulate your surroundings. Intellectual people, on average, have a better ability to concentrate. (parang gusto kong ma validate sa mga Dean’s Listers...)

Your capacity to concentrate is one of the most indicators of intelligence. Whereas the ability to direct your attention and exert mental strength is called FOCUS. It includes what you think about or avoid thinking about, what you notice or overlook, what you believe about things, how long it takes for you to remember something, how quickly you can ingest and assimilate information, etc.

Why Can’t I Focus?

Are you always asking yourself, “Why can’t I focus?” If this is the case, you are not alone classmate. Our ability to focus has clearly been hampered by the digital age. According to Apple Analytics, we unlock our smartphones about 80 times per day, which undoubtedly underestimates the full scope of our digital diversions.

Admit it or not, we have that difficulty resisting the urge to check our phones even when we should be focusing on something else, in our case, our readings in preparation for the weekend classes. These interruptions aren’t trivial; they impair our ability to get important things done and reach our potential. Hence, focusing become such a challenge.

Why is it so difficult to concentrate? What causes a lack of focus?

Lifehack.org enumerated 7 things that affect your ability to focus.

External Distractions

These are things in our environment that divert our attention away from what we’re doing. They can be noise, sights, or events that occur because of our interactions with others or our use of technology. Unexpected phone calls or text messages, social media alerts, nearby conversations, and interactions with others are just a few instances.

Internal Distractions

These are distractions that originate within us. They are linked to our thoughts, emotions, and impulses. It includes unpleasant feelings such as worry or annoyance, as well as a sudden urge to check our phones or take a break from what we are doing.

Lack of Motivation

When people are unmotivated, they switch between tasks more frequently. However, when people are driven, they are more likely to stay focused on what they are doing.

Motivation functions as fuel, keeping us motivated and involved in what we’re doing. When we lack motivation, it is difficult to fully engage in a task. This lack of engagement makes it difficult to maintain focus and pay attention for an extended period.

We are more easily sidetracked when we are not motivated. External factors, as well as our own thoughts, can quickly divert our focus away from the activity at hand.

Unhealthy Diet

Your dietary choices have a significant impact on your capacity to focus. Thus, your food choices can have a direct impact on how well your brain performs.

Excess of sugary foods, refined carbohydrates, and highly processed food can impair your ability to focus. A spike in blood sugar levels caused by sugar consumption is usually followed by a strong energy drop, which disrupts your attention. Similarly, meals high in harmful saturated fats can cause inflammation, which can affect brain functions.

To increase attention and concentration, it is essential to maintain a balanced diet that promotes gut health and brain function.

Lack of Sleep

Sleep deprivation can have a substantial impact

on your ability to pay attention. Insufficient rest slows down your reaction, leading to inattentiveness and decreasing your responsiveness to external stimuli. This diminished alertness creates difficulties in absorbing new information and responding effectively.

Prioritizing a good night's sleep is an important step in improving your focus and mental clarity.

Stress and Burnout

People who experience burnout have a higher time staying focused. Burnout can change the way your brain works, making it harder for you to bounce back from tough situations. It makes you more sensitive to the external environment and makes it harder for you to deal with common disruptions like interruptions, notifications, and distractions.

Mental Health Conditions

Certain mental conditions such as ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder), Anxiety, and Depression can significantly hamper your ability to focus. If you suspect that you might have one of these conditions, consult a professional who can provide a proper diagnosis and treatment options.

How to Increase Your Attention Span

There are several ways to improve your short attention span. It's a matter of developing habits and learning self-discipline and focus. Enumerated below are 15 ways how to increase your attention span:

- Curb your screen time,
- Remove distractions
- Take notes
- Drink more water
- Get some exercise
- Try meditating
- Take a break
- Chew gum
- Stop multitasking
- Get enough sleep
- Turn the music up
- Practice attentive listening
- Experiment with timeboxing
- Try intermittent fasting

- Play some brain games

Final Words

Learning how to improve your focus is how you break free from the never-ending cycle of feeling busy and overwhelmed all the time. You are not alone if you are having trouble focusing. The reasons for the lack of focus are numerous, but determining the root cause is the first step toward finding a solution.

Following the 15 tips will help you improve your focus and attention span. Tackle your focus issues one day at a time for the short term. Patience and practice are all it takes to build a longer, more durable attention span.

HAPPY READING!



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