


'Focus & Concentration'

Understanding your brain -
the neuroscience of staying focused



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CHAMBER OF COMMERCE INC.

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- ❑ Workplace psychologist for 15 years
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Agenda

- 1 A model for focus - learn about the supporting neurochemicals
- 2 How to overcome limbic friction
- 3 Science supported strategies to transition into focus
- 4 Short behavioural practices to support focus
- 5 Critical decompression / defocusing tools

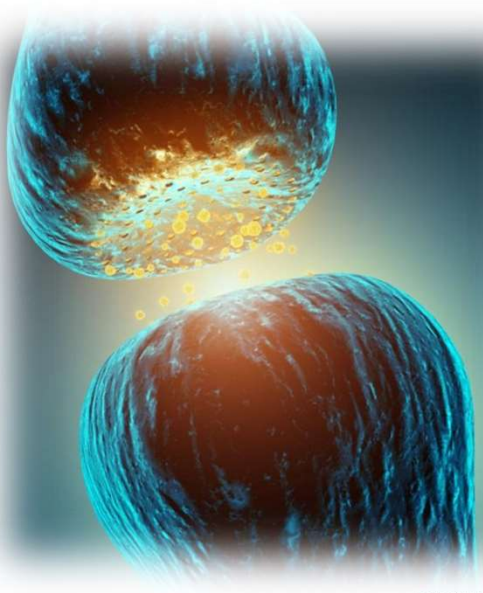
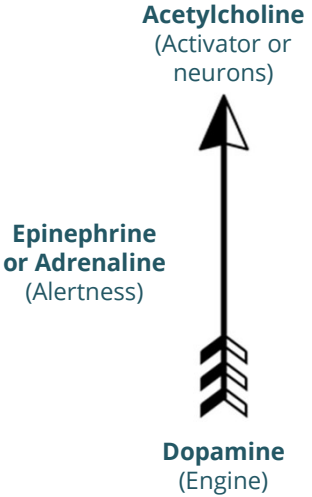
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A model for focus



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Understanding your brain

The stage metaphor

Think of your brain as a stage in a small theatre.

A stage can only accommodate so many actors before a play starts to get chaotic. The actors bump into each other and can't move about in graceful harmony.



It's chaos! This translates into stress & frustration.

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Mental Struggle

'Limbic friction'

How well we concentrate depends upon how we manage 'limbic friction'.



Q. So, what is limbic friction?!

A. The strain (cognitive load) that's required in order to overcome one of two states within your body.

- 1) Anxiousness – can't calm down/relax and can't engage in activity
- 2) Tiredness/lazy/lacking motivation – too calm

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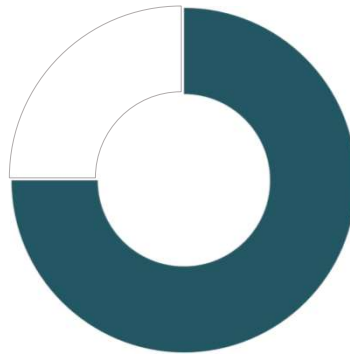
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What's the optimal time frame for focus?

Ultradian cycles – 90-minute segments



How many daily ultradian cycles can you perform?

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Understanding your brain

2 areas of the brain

1. The prefrontal cortex **controls conscious mental activity** (*understanding, deciding, recalling, memorising and inhibiting*), and uses a lot of metabolic resources (*glucose in the blood*) to function.

2. However, another area of the brain, the basal ganglia, **controls routine behaviour**, which doesn't require a lot of active mental attention.



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Multitasking - is it possible?

ANSWER: No and Yes!

NO = If you want to **focus** and be **accurate** you can only **switch** between tasks

YES = When a task is familiar, routine and becomes almost unconscious (using your basal ganglia)



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Focus and distractions

- Our brains are finely attuned to distraction.
- Distractions signal to the brain that something has changed.
- A distraction is an alert that says...
'Orient your attention here now; this could be dangerous.'

The goal is not constant focus, but to have short periods of distraction-free time every day.

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Can't focus?

Pinpoint the problem/s

What causes you to lose focus?

Is it...

- Fatigue, hunger, thirst
- Interruptions from others
- Social media addiction
- Constant phone calls/emails/teams messages/noises

Figuring out what the distractions are is the 1st step to lengthening your concentration

SUGGESTION: Diarise the distractions

I'm not lazy
I'm just on my
energy
saving mode



Session recap

Science supported strategies to transition into focus	Short behavioural practice to support focus	Critical decompression/defocusing tools
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listen to binary beats 2. Cold water emersion 3. Caffeine 4. 13 min meditation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decide when you'll decide 2. Prioritise 3. Deliberate gaze 4. Listen to white, pink brown noise 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Non sleep deep rest 2. Write down your ideas/create visuals 3. Activate other areas of your brain

Thank you

Follow us for bite size insights and articles exploring workplace mental wellbeing, mental fitness, & practical mental wellbeing tools.

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