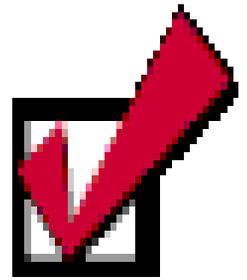


Defeating the Demons of Distraction: Increasing Productivity & Decreasing Stress



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Self-Check



- 1. The cell phone rings all day or I get lost on the Internet.
- 2. I don't complete enough work because people interrupt me all day.
- 3. I try to multi task, but it doesn't work.
- 4. My work space is so noisy that I have trouble trying to think.
- 5. I begin to work, but I think about problems or responsibilities.
- 6. I'm tired and find it hard to focus.
- 7. Illness or medication seems to interfere with my attention or memory.
- 8. My mind is racing and I can't deal with one thing at a time.

My Major Distractions

Note the times, situations, and conditions under which you are most distracted.

Times

Situations

Conditions

Rank each one using a scale from 1 to 10 with 10 as the most serious.

Distractions: Tasks, Settings, and You



Moving from Intention to Action

You

- Become Aware
- Gain Insight

You

- Select Strategies
- Use Strategies & Support

You

- Monitor & Recognize
- Adjust & Maintain

Assemble Your Arsenal

- Mindfulness
- Self-talk
- Visualization
- Self-monitoring
- Rules & routines
- Contracts



The Technology Demon

**is on the prowl
all day and night.**

**It invites us to get lost
in a maze of texting,
chatting, surfing,
and
gaming
long after it is
appropriate or useful**

My Technology Journal

Device	Amount of Time Spent Daily	Amount of Money Spent Monthly/Yearly	Frustrating Incident(s)	Lessons Learned
Cell phone				
E mail				
Social Networking				
Other				
Other				



The *OTHERS* Demon

**has many faces:
co-workers, bosses,
significant others
and/or children
who feel we should be
available 24/7.**

**When we can't stop
interruptions, set
boundaries, or say no,
opportunities for creativity
are lost.**

Tracking Interruptions by *Others*

Who Distracted You?	What Did They Do?	Where Did it Happen?	When Did it Happen?	Why Do You Think it Happened?	What Was the Effect on Your Work?

Assertiveness with *Others Demon*

- If you lack clear directions, say, “Let’s clarify the goal and list the steps that need to be taken. This will ensure that things go as we’d like.”
- If you lack specific standards, say, “What questions need to be addressed in this report? I’m assuming that accuracy is the critical element in this project.”
- If you lack a timetable or schedule, then say, “If I had a magic wand, when are the due dates for this?”
- If you lack knowledge about possible resources, say, “If difficulties or questions arise, who can be called or what resources are available?”

TO DO
 TO DO
 TO DO
 TO DO

TO DO
 TO DO



The Activities Demon

**attacks us when we
inappropriately
multitask,
travel,
rush, or
face tedious,
difficult tasks.**

**The emotionality of events like
holidays makes us easy prey
for distractions.**

Stop the *I'll Do it Later* Habit

- Identify the tasks that seem to trigger procrastination
- Consider both the external and internal consequences
- Divide complicated or long-term projects into easily completed chunks
- Post a calendar that lists times to work on each chunk
- Collaborate with others to get the task or chore started and completed
- Combat myths such as, *I do my best under pressure, I need to complete the entire task in one sitting, or I need more information or resources*



The Spaces Demon

**lurks where we
live,
work, or play.**

**Being distracted by sights and
sounds**

**or wallowing in messy,
unpleasant settings**

**leads to feeling overwhelmed,
to inaccurate work,
and to a slower pace.**

Deal with the Spaces Demon

In your office:

- ___ Use a device that reduces noise.
- ___ Place a small fan for white noise
- ___ Use earplugs
- ___ Use soft music and earphones if allowed by work rules.

In your home:

- ___ Make a sign: “Pick it up, use it, and put it away!”
- ___ Put up a mini screen when your desk is facing a doorway or located in a space with visual distractions
- ___ Move your workspace so that you are facing a wall rather than a distracting window, door, or gathering space
- ___ Turn off speakers that delivers blaring music or programs from other rooms



The Stress Demon

can be activated by internal or external triggers, robbing us of the psychic energy needed to pay attention.

Without conscious attention to stress management, we make too many mistakes.

Keep a Stress Diary

Day/ Time/ Place	Event	Sym- ptoms	Triggers	Effects

Defeating the Stress Demon

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Games | <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Television | <input type="checkbox"/> Humor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports | <input type="checkbox"/> Rest |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talking | <input type="checkbox"/> Break |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hobby | <input type="checkbox"/> Yoga |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dancing/singing | <input type="checkbox"/> Nature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming | <input type="checkbox"/> Meditation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bathing/Hot Tub | <input type="checkbox"/> T'ai Chi |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Painting/Crafts | <input type="checkbox"/> Music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |



The Fatigue Demon

**saps the energy needed
to focus and
maintain concentration.**

**Though we try to deny it,
exhaustion leaves us
spinning our wheels,
committing errors,
or even,
causing accidents.**

What's Robbing You of Sleep?

- ___ 1. Watching television, falling asleep in a chair
- ___ 2. Playing video games, surfing, or using email & social media
- ___ 3. Reading books or playing music
- ___ 4. Experiencing emotional stress
- ___ 5. Snoring, the snoring of others, or sleep apnea.

What's Robbing You of Sleep?

- ___ 6. Having sleep problems as a side effect of medication
- ___ 7. Experiencing interrupted sleep due to physical issues such as indigestion
- ___ 8. Experiencing interrupted sleep due to parenting or care taking
- ___ 9. Having job-related swing shifts
- ___ 10. Engaging in excessive socializing



The Illness/ Medication Demon

Robs us of our vigor and can lead to emotional ups and downs.

Our performance can plummet due to side effects like memory loss, confusion, insomnia, nausea, or headache.

Medication Inventory

Medication	Dosage	Pharmacy	Possible Side Effects	Physician

Use Visualization

- Visualize the last time you felt physically strong and fit.
- Specify when and where you were feeling most rested and healthy.
- Imagine and note what you were doing and who you were with.
- How positive did you feel and how long did the feeling last?
- How often have you had similar feelings in the past year?



The Unruly Mind Demon can have three heads.

**It can involve
a racing mind,
daydreaming,
or hyper focus.**

**The more unruly the mind,
the less productive we are.**

Defenses Against an Unruly Mind

- Select times when you are most alert.
- Use your body to slow down: stretch and/or take deep breaths.
- Visualize yourself working smoothly
- Engage in positive self-talk; say “Slow down. Take one step at a time.”
- Deal with intrusive thoughts. Say “Stop! Now is not the time to think about this.”
- Imagine yourself as a sprinter. Concentrate for a while and then take a break.
- Congratulate yourself as you focus and complete tasks.

Tips for Dealing with Hyper Focus & Daydreaming

- **Hyper focus**

- Set smaller goals
- Use alarms to signal the end of a work period.
- Ask others to interrupt you at a prearranged time.



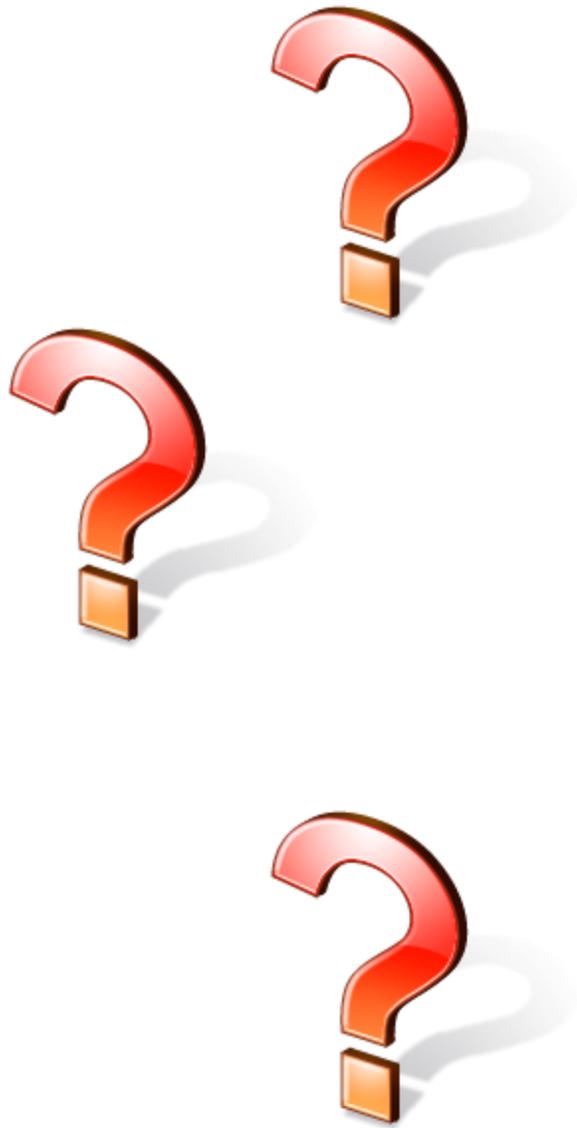
- **Daydreaming**

- Identify times or situations when the behavior is most likely to occur.
- Rotate interesting with boring tasks.
- Set aside times for creativity and relaxation



Monitoring Work Flow: Check Your Feelings

- Tired
- Hungry
- Tense
- Confused
- Scattered
- Tired eyes
- Worried
- Headache
- Distracted
- Interrupted
- Other:



Monitoring Work Flow: Check Your Work

- ___ Quantity
- ___ Rate of progress
- ___ Quality
- ___ Accuracy
- ___ Completeness
- ___ Legibility



Balance of Consequences

	Positive Consequences	Negative Consequences
Short-term		
Long-term		
Other Issues		

Move From Intention to Action



- What distractions need to be decreased?
- Where and when are they most likely to occur?
- Why are they problematic??
- How will you defeat your demons of distraction?
- How and when will you motivate yourself?
- How and when will you monitor yourself?

Possible Goals

- **Technology Demon**

- Impose an electric lockdown for 15 to 20 minutes each day
- Reduce or eliminate use of cell phone while driving

- **Others Demon**

- Post a sign or other announcement to protect your think time
- Create a message to tell others of your need for fewer interruptions and non-distracting conditions

- **Activities Demon**

- Schedule activities that require accuracy and detail when you are most alert and less distracted
- Take breaks when doing difficult or tedious tasks, especially when working in areas of vulnerability

- **Spaces Demon**

- Arrange an non-distracting area to work on difficult or tedious tasks
- Organize materials for quick and easy access

Possible Goals (Continued)

- **Stress Demon**

- Learn 1 to 3 new stress management strategies
- Schedule at least 15 minutes each day for de-stressing

- **Fatigue Demon**

- Develop a sleep routine to increase adequate and restful sleep
- Include breaks to rest and reenergize

- **Medication/Illness Demons**

- Schedule yearly medical, dental, and other appointments
- Create medical/medication files for self and other family members

- **Unruly Mind Demon**

- Schedule times to use the Stop, Look, and Listen technique.
- Schedule short intense work sessions and then take a break

Develop an Action Plan

Demon:

Strategies:

Tips:

Steps:

Buddy:

Schedule:

Weekly Schedule

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							

Prevent Pitfalls

- What barriers are you likely to confront?
- How can you deal with these barriers?
- What will you do or say?
- What actions will you take?
- Who or what resources can help?

Remember...



- One distraction can make you more vulnerable to other distractions.
- One distraction can set a chain reaction of non productivity.
- Greater mindfulness about the subtle, pervasive, and negative nature of distractions will help you increase serenity and decrease.