

Focus on One Thing at a Time

Multi-tasking is counterproductive. One more time, in case you were focused elsewhere: Working on a project while bouncing between group chat and YouTube is unlikely to add up to efficiency – or enjoyment.

In fact, you're actually "switch tasking," focusing on one thing, then another and back again.

The next time you catch yourself in the act, pause and notice. And congratulate yourself for doing so, this is a moment of mindfulness! It is normal for our attention to move from one thing to the next, but switch tasking can take more energy.

Watch how this works when you're with friends or family. It can be hard to have a meaningful conversation with the TV on top volume, or when one person is head down in their smartphone.

Set your intention to do one thing at a time. As best you can, notice when you veer off track, and simply bring your attention back to the task at hand.

Try setting a time limit – start small – to see what it's like to focus on one thing at one time. See how your experience changes.

WHAT ELSE IN YOUR LIFE MIGHT BENEFIT FROM A SINGULAR FOCUS?

MINDFULNESS PRACTICE HELPS TO BUILD "ATTENTION MUSCLES."
FOR TIPS, SEE CHAPTER 7

Give Yourself a Break

Here is a study to remember the next time your nose is to the grindstone.

Draugiem Group, a social networking company, used a computer app to examine employee focus and productivity. In widely shared findings, they claimed to have landed on the ideal work-to-break formula: 52 minutes of focus, followed up by 17 minutes of rest or recharge.

Other work-hack experts suggest 90 minutes of focus is the charm.

Meanwhile, the Pomodoro Technique breaks work into 25-minute intervals, or pomodoros, separated by five-minute breaks. (Every four pomodoros is followed by a 15-to-20 minute break.)

Few of us are in charge of the ebb and flow of our work days, so be sure to take breaks when they are available. If you have the option, stop for lunch, rather than working straight through. While it may seem counterintuitive, time away from work helps to get things done!

BUSY IS NOT A BADGE OF HONOR
"Take the 'busy' badge, throw it in the trash and replace it with one that says 'rested.' And after you do, don't post about it on Twitter. Step outside, lie down in the grass and look at the clouds. And don't get up until you're good and ready."

CARL RICHARDS

