



Essential Sparks for Boosting Focus (and Productivity)

“A clear and focused mind will last a lifetime. Getting your mind in shape is nothing less than the key to sustainable success in the world.” ~ Russell (not Richard) Simmons

Do This Now	Then This
<p>Knock out the low hanging fruit. Devices that make noise, e-mail previews that pop on your screen, and NPR or radio in the background are things within your control. Start by eliminating them.</p> <p>PS... dscout research found we touch our phones 2617 times a day!</p>	<p>Watch for what pulls your attention away now. Is it external, something else in your environment? Is it internal, like a thought, feeling, or impulse? What needs to happen to quiet, pause, or address (even more permanently) what you find?</p>
<p>Establish priorities. Capture to do items on a paper or virtual list. Place them in the appropriate order. For complex items, make 3-5 bullet points underneath so you can work in chunks.</p> <p>PS... A common habit is to do what’s in front of you without stopping to focus on the goal. This reduces the ROI of your cognitive capacity.</p>	<p>At any given time when you feel a loss of focus, ask - what’s the most important thing to accomplish now, next, today? It’s easier to regain focus when you are clear on what needs to be done and the reason for doing it. If something pops to mind, add it to your list to get it out of your head.</p>
<p>Demand presence. Think of it like fishing, you want to catch your attention wherever it went and reel it back in to where you want it.</p> <p>PS...research has shown that those that practice mindfulness more quickly regain focus after breaking attention or multi-tasking.</p>	<p>Spend a few minutes a day practicing mindfulness or meditation. With regular practice, even just a few minutes at a time, you literally change your brain circuitry so you can more easily direct your attention on demand. Find free practices on-line.</p>
<p>Plan your brain breaks. Start small, allowing a short break about every 15 minutes and build to larger chunks of times up to 60- 90 minutes.</p> <p>PS...your brain has a natural ultradian rhythm and is designed to work in chunks of time with breaks in between.</p>	<p>Give yourself a pat on the back for your time spent focusing. A good 15-30 seconds of feeling good about your actions activates the dopamine response and associates focusing with feeling positive.</p>

That Essential Spark works with individuals, teams, and organizations on how to use neuroscience to accelerate a path to the desired future.