

Resisting the pain: the difficulty with concentrating

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Do you find yourself looking at your Facebook page or watching Youtube videos instead of getting some work done? Or daydreaming about your plans for the summer? Procrastination is a serious problem and tends to occur mostly when we need to get some thinking work done. I mean, it's alright to daydream every now and again or to check your emails and Facebook when having a break from work or study. The problem crops up when you need to focus but you just cannot because your attention span is shorter than that of the ill-focused goldfish. Yes, that's right, a recent study made by Microsoft Corporation shows that people now generally lose concentration after eight seconds. I am in my second year at University and in almost every lecture, I find it hard to sit still and pay attention.

If it's not looking at my phone, it's daydreaming about my summer or what my plans are for the weekend. It's horrible. I hate it. But I can't resist it. I become fidgety and pick up my mobile phone to check my emails, messages or I find myself scrolling down the never-ending news feeds of social media, completely oblivious to what is going on around me. Yes, we live in a digital age where we even use mobile phones in the bathroom.

Digital devices are more or less to blame for our short attention span but in some cases, or in my case, it's anything. I'm serious, unless I am totally engrossed in my studying or paying attention to something I enjoy, I will not sit down for more than an hour without getting up, snacking, fidgeting or daydreaming. It might be that I am just a nervous person but then, how do I manage to sit down for hours on end if I'm doing something I enjoy?

Unfortunately, I cannot find a solution to this problem but I do find it helpful to study around people who are also studying, I feel I can concentrate more

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that way. Taking stagger breaks also helps. These time periods are good to quell whatever may be distracting me like food, gossip or anxiety. My advice to University students reading this is that when it comes to any thinking work, one of the most effective distraction-management techniques is to switch off all communication devices.

Our brain prefers to focus on things that are right in front of us. Blocking out external distractions altogether, especially if you get a lot of them, seems to be one of the best strategies for improving mental performance. There is no trick to this, you simply must switch things off, or you won't focus. So part of the solution to managing distractions is quite easy in theory, it just takes some courage.