

Find Your Focus

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What has become very apparent to me over these past few years is that you can have all the goals in the world and as much motivation as you can possibly handle, but, if you don't have focus, eventually you run out of steam and leave goals unreached. One way to think about this is to imagine a bon fire. The wood represents your goals, so the bigger the pile the more goals you have and the more motivation and focus you will need. The fire itself represents motivation. You can light a match and burn some kindling, and if you are really talented you might be able to get all of the logs burning with just that. Otherwise, you will need something else to keep the fire going and allow you to continue to pursue your goals. This is focus, or in our example, oxygen.

When you first start out to achieve something you will have some amount of focus simply because the task is new and you are excited about it. But as time goes by and you continue to try to achieve your goals, if you do not allow yourself to focus and provide oxygen to your fire, your motivation will quickly go out and you will be left with nothing but a whole bunch of unfinished goals.

So how do you find your focus? Whenever I start to feel myself slipping or have a day where I am completely unmotivated to do work, there are some things I do to get myself back on track. First and foremost, you have to make the time to allow yourself to focus. It doesn't matter how good your intentions are, if you don't make the time to allow yourself to focus you won't ever have the opportunity to begin to focus, and focus will never come. Force yourself to turn away from the TV or computer and put your phone away, even if it is just a few times a week. Give yourself the gift of a moment in time where you are allowed to focus on yourself.

Secondly, when it comes to focus, you have to know your optimal learning environment. Focusing, like learning, takes a huge amount of mental effort. To be able to learn something new you have to be able to focus, so create for yourself an environment in which you can learn to allow yourself to focus. For example, I am stimulated more by auditory signals than visual, so if somebody has the TV on, me trying to read or do any work is a lost cause. However, if the TV is muted or if I am wearing earplugs I am good to go. The same goes with music. I can have music playing lightly in the background so long as the music doesn't have any lyrics; otherwise my mind only focuses on the song. If you make time for yourself to focus in an optimal learning environment you have given yourself the opportunity to focus.

Just because you have the opportunity to focus doesn't mean that will actually happen. In my case, creating a time with nothing else to do and everything quiet sounds more like an opportunity to take a nap than to do work. So, in order to avoid falling into the trap of becoming a sloth, always have little things you can do to help you get on track. For me, it is reading. On my coffee table I always have books and magazines laid out. If I am trying to accomplish something but am lacking a starting point, I can grab one of those books and start to read or flip through the

pages of the magazine. This is not intense work and it activates my brain. Plus, because the reading I do is usually related to what I am trying to accomplish, I feel like I am progressing towards that goal, which in turn makes me more excited to get going on more intense work. Just like lighting kindling helps you to start the bon fire, having simple things you can accomplish will motivate you and allow you to focus on accomplishing bigger tasks.

Finally, once you get your fire burning the last thing you need is for it to be put out, so make sure others know that this pre-determined amount of time is your time. You are not to be disturbed during this time, so if this is too much to ask during the day then make the commitment to the morning before others are awake or at night after they have gone to sleep. Silence or power-down your phone and limit all other distractions as much as possible. You have put so much effort in to finding something you want to accomplish and are excited about, you have given yourself the opportunity to accomplish this goal by creating an environment and a space in time to do so, now you have to make the most of this opportunity by extending this time as long as possible.

Like I said last month, what are you going to get done by the end of this year? If there is something you want to do, do not wait until 12:00 AM on January 1st to start. Dive in headfirst right now. Know what you want to accomplish, believe that what you are trying to accomplish is of value, and find your focus to get the job done. Here's to faith, strength, and passion.

Get big or die tryin'.

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