

Concentration Exercises: Ways to Increase your Concentration

Does your mind flit from one thing to another? Do you have trouble focusing on something for more than a few minutes? Do you consequently have a bunch of half-finished projects lying around the house? If so, what should you do?

When you focus your thought, you increase its strength. The exercises that follow are tedious and monotonous, but useful. If you will persist in them you will find they are very valuable, as they increase your powers of concentration. It will be necessary to first train the body to obey the commands of the mind. I want you to gain control of your muscular movements. The following exercise is especially good in assisting you to acquire perfect control of the muscles.

Exercise 1: Sitting Still in a Chair

Sit in a comfortable chair and see how still you can keep. This is not as easy as it seems. You will have to center your attention on sitting still. Watch and see that you are not making any involuntary muscular movements. By a little practice you will find you are able to sit still without a movement of the muscles for fifteen minutes. At first I advise sitting in a relaxed position for five minutes. After you are able to keep perfectly still, increase the time to ten minutes and then to fifteen. This is as long as it is necessary. But never strain yourself to keep still. You must be relaxed completely. You will find this habit of relaxing is very good.

Exercise 2: Fix Gaze on Fingers

Sit in a chair with your head up and your chin out, shoulders back. Raise your right arm until it is on the level with your shoulder, pointing to your right. Look around, with head only, and fix your gaze on your fingers, and keep the arm perfectly still for one minute. Do the same exercise with your left arm. When you are able to keep the arm perfectly steady, increase the time until you are able to do this five minutes with each arm. Turn the palm of the hand downward when it is outstretched, as this is the easiest position. If you will keep your eyes fixed on the tips of the fingers, you will be able to tell if you are keeping your arm perfectly still.

Exercise 3: Fix Eyes on Outstretched Glass

Fill a small glass full of water, and grasp it by the fingers; put the arm directly in front of you. Now fix the eyes upon the glass and try to keep the arm so steady that no movement will be noticeable. Do this first for one moment and then increase it to five. Do the exercise with one arm first and then the other.

The purpose of the above exercises is to gain control over the involuntary muscular movement, making your actions entirely voluntary. The following exercise [is designed] to bring your voluntary muscles under the control of the will, so that your mental forces may control your muscular movements.

Exercise 4: Concentrate on Opening and Closing Fists

Move your chair up to a table, placing your hands upon it, clenching the fists, keeping the back of the hand on the table, the thumb doubled over the fingers. Now fix your gaze upon the fist for a while, then gradually extend the thumb, keeping your whole attention fixed upon the act, just as if it was a matter of great importance. Then gradually extend your first finger, then your second and so on until you open the rest. Then reverse the process, closing first the last one opened and then the rest, and finally you will have the fist again in the original position with the thumb closed over the finger. Do this exercise with the left hand. Keep up this exercise first with one hand and then the other until you have done it five times with each hand. In a few days, you can increase it to ten times.

Exercise 5: Concentration on the Within

Lie down and thoroughly relax your muscles. Concentrate on the beating of your heart. Do not pay any attention to anything else. Think how this great organ is pumping the blood to every part of the body; try to actually picture the blood leaving the great reservoir and going in one stream right down to the toes. Picture another going down the arms to the tips of the fingers. After a little practice you can actually feel the blood passing through your system.

Exercise 6: Concentrating on Sleep

What is known as the water method is, although very simple, very effective in inducing sleep. Put a full glass of clear water on a table in your sleeping room. Sit in a chair beside the table and gaze into the glass of water and think how calm it is. Then picture yourself getting into just as calm a state. In a short time, you will find the nerves becoming quiet and you will be able to go to sleep. Sometimes it is good to picture yourself becoming drowsy to induce sleep. Those who are troubled with insomnia will find these sleep exercises that quiet the nerves very effective. Just keep the idea in your mind that there is no difficulty in going to sleep; banish all fear of insomnia. Practice these exercises and you will sleep.

Exercise 7: Practice Talking Before a Mirror

Make two marks on your mirror on a level with your eyes, and think of them as two human eyes looking into yours. Your eyes will probably blink a little at first. Do not move your head, but stand still. Concentrate all your thoughts on keeping your head perfectly still. Do not let another thought come into your mind. Then, still keeping the head, eyes and body still, think that you look like a reliable person should; like a person that anyone would have confidence in. While standing before the mirror practice deep breathing. See that there is plenty of fresh air in the room, and that you are literally feasting on it. You will find that, as it permeates every cell, your timidity will disappear. It has been replaced by a sense of peace and power. Three minutes a day is long enough for the practice of this exercise.

Exercise 8: When You Read

No one can think without first concentrating his thoughts on the subject in hand. Every person should train him/herself to think clearly. An excellent exercise is to read some short story and then write just an abridged statement. Read an article in a newspaper, and see in how few words you can express it. Reading an article to get only the essentials requires the closest concentration. If you are unable to write out what you read, you will know you are weak in concentration. Instead of writing it out, you can express it orally if you wish. Go to your room and deliver it as if you were talking to someone. You will find exercises like this of the greatest value in developing concentration and learning to think.

After you have practiced a number of these simple exercises, read a book for twenty minutes and then write down what you have read. The chances are that at first you will not remember very many details, but with a little practice you will be able to write a very good account of what you have read. The closer the concentration, the more accurate the account will be.

It is a good idea when time is limited to read only a short sentence and then try to write it down word for word. When you are able to do this, read two or more sentences and treat similarly. The practice will produce very good results if you keep it up until the habit is fixed. If you will just utilize your spare time in practicing exercises like those suggested, you can gain wonderful powers of concentration. You will find that in order to remember every word in a sentence, you must keep out every thought but that which you wish to remember, and this power of inhibition alone will more than compensate for the trouble of the exercise.