

POWERFUL FOCUS



A 7-DAY PLAN TO DEVELOP MENTAL CLARITY AND
BUILD STRONG FOCUS

THIBAUT MEURISSE

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CLARITY AND BUILD STRONG FOCUS

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CONTENTS

Who is this book for?

Your Free Step-by-Step Workbook

Your Productivity Series

Introduction

I. Gaining clarity

Day 1—15 questions to identify what you want

Day 2—Gaining clarity regarding what you want

Day 3—Gaining clarity regarding what needs to be done

Day 4—Gaining clarity regarding how it needs to be done

II. Eliminate Distractions and Obstacles

Day 5—Simplifying

Day 6—Reducing useless input

Day 7—Eliminating friction and energy waste

Conclusion

Other Books By The Authors:

About the Author

WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?

Do you keep jumping from one task to the next? Do you struggle to stay focused long enough to achieve success? Is your mind all over the place?

If so, you need to develop Deep Focus.

More specifically, you'll find this book useful if you want to:

- Eliminate distractions and develop laser-sharp focus
- Stop jumping from one shiny object to the next
- Overcome information overload so that you can move forward with your goals
- Gain clarity about your goals so that you can focus on what matters
- And much more

So are you ready to develop unshakeable focus and get things done?

Your Free Step-By-Step Workbook

To help build unshakeable focus I've created a workbook as a companion guide to this book. Make sure you download it at the following URL:

<https://whatispersonaldevelopment.org/powerful-focus>

If you have any difficulties downloading the workbook contact me at:

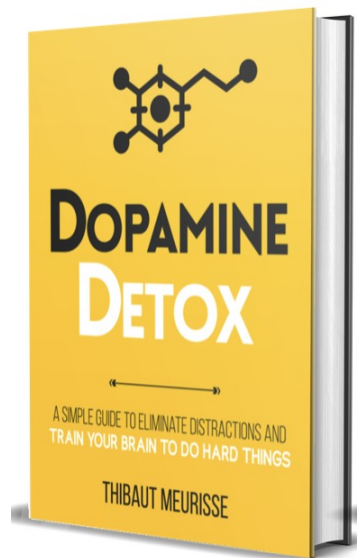
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and I will send it to you as soon as possible.

Boost your productivity now with The Productivity Series

This book is the third book in the “**Productivity Series**”. You can check out the first book, “Dopamine Detox” below:

[Click here to get “Dopamine Detox”](#)



INTRODUCTION

The ability to focus is one of the most valuable assets you'll ever develop. When you use it to achieve your most exciting goals, you can reach levels of success you would never have imagined possible.

Often, the difference between an average person and a highly successful one is their level of focus. Successful people know what they want and place all their focus into the accomplishment of their goals. By doing so consistently over a long period of time, they turbocharge their productivity and achieve most of their goals.

What about you? Are you the master of your focus or the slave of distractions?

In *Deep Focus*, you'll learn how to move from distracted to laser-sharp focused in just seven days. Each day, you'll be given exercises to strengthen your focus. By the end of the seven days, you'll have developed a deeper understanding of what focus is, how focus works and you will be well on your way to becoming one of the most focused people you know.

In **Part I. Gaining Clarity**, we'll work on refining your vision. As you develop a clearer vision, you'll be better able to identify the key tasks to work on today, this week, and this month. The more clarity you gain, the easier it will be for you to focus. More specifically, we'll cover the following:

- **Day 1**—15 questions to identify what you want.
- **Day 2**—Gaining clarity regarding what you want.

- **Day 3**—Gaining clarity regarding what needs to be done.
- **Day 4**—Gaining clarity regarding how it needs to be done.

In **Part II. Eliminating Distractions and Obstacles**, you'll discover how to remove all the distractions around you and develop laser-sharp focus. You'll learn to simplify. As you do so, you'll feel more in control of your day. Here is what we'll cover:

- **Day 5**—Simplifying.
- **Day 6**—Reducing useless input.
- **Day 7**—Eliminating friction and energy waste.

Sounds good?

If so, let's get started, shall we?

PART I

GAINING CLARITY

I believe the number one reason we're so busy and restless is that we lack clarity. Therefore, one of the most important things to do to increase focus is to gain clarity regarding:

- What you want and why,
- What exactly you need to do to achieve your goals, and
- How to achieve your goals with maximum effectiveness.

In short, you need to know the why, the what, and the how.

That's what we're going to cover in this part. Without further ado, let's get started with Day 1.

DAY 1—15 QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY WHAT YOU WANT

Know what you want. Clarity is power. And vague goals promote vague results.

— ROBIN SHARMA, WRITER.

Today, I would like you to spend time answering the 15 questions presented in this section. Don't worry if you can't find the right answers. There is no such thing as a perfect answer. Simply try your best to answer each question honestly.

The more time you spent answering them, the more clarity you'll gain. And, once again, the more clarity you have, the better it will be to focus and reach your goals.

The 15 questions are divided into three categories:

- A. Eliciting your desire,
- B. Finding your strengths and unique abilities, and
- C. Uncovering your passion.

Let's get started.

A. Eliciting desire

1. What do you really, really want?

On the surface, this is a rather simple question. Yet, most of us haven't taken enough time to think about it. Using your action guide, write down anything that comes to mind. Make sure

you include all your crazy goals and dreams. Don't limit yourself. Treat this as the brainstorming phase.

Now, look at your list. Identify your top two or three goals. Which of them do you really, really want above all the others?

2. If you were to wake up tomorrow, completely alone without any family member, friend, or colleague to influence your decisions, what would you do differently?

Your family members—especially your parents—or acquaintances may have led you to make the wrong decisions, such as choosing the wrong career or dating the wrong person. Imagine you could do anything you wanted without anyone judging you. What would you do differently?

3. If you were to be totally honest with yourself, what would you start doing now and what would you stop doing?

Spend a few minutes to focus on what you want, deep down. Is what you're currently doing today what you really want to do? If you keep doing what you're doing today, this week or this month, will you be where you want to be five or ten years down the line? In short, are you focusing on the right things?

4. If you were guaranteed to succeed in everything you do, where would you want to be in three years?

Let go of any mental limitations. What's the best possible place you could be mentally, physically, spiritually, and financially in three years? Do you want more freedom? Do you want to find the right partner? Do you want to pursue a career you love? Write down everything you want.

5. If you could spend your day exactly the way you wanted to, what would you be doing from morning to night? What would your ideal day consist of?

Close your eyes and imagine yourself during your ideal day. What does it look like? What time do you wake? What do you eat for breakfast? What activities do you engage in? Who do you spend time with? In which country or city are you living and in what kind of house?

The more clarity you have, the better.

Remember, people who define their life goals are more likely to achieve them than those who don't. This is because they know what they need to focus on every day. Do you?

To clarify your vision further, don't hesitate to run through this exercise over and over in the coming weeks or months.

6. If you could focus only on doing one thing for the rest of your life, what would it be?

Although you might struggle with this question, try to answer it as best you can. What one thing could you possibly commit to doing for the rest of your life? Pick just one thing, and make sure it's the most important thing to you.

7. If you understood and truly believed you could achieve absolutely anything you want by sticking to it for long enough, what would you pursue for the next three to five years?

What is the one goal you want to achieve the most right now? What really excites you? Could you do whatever it takes for as long as necessary until you achieve it?

By now, you should have a better idea of what you want. Feel free to review these questions as often as you need to. Clarity needs to be refined over time. Don't expect to find the right answer the first time and don't forget, it's possible to change it whenever necessary.

B. Finding your strengths and unique abilities

Identifying your strengths and working from them is one of the most important things you can do to ensure you place your focus where it should be. If you spend your days doing the things you are poor or mediocre at, you'll never achieve extraordinary results, and you will probably feel miserable as a result. Therefore, identify your strengths and use them as often as possible.

Also, remember that, when sustained over a long period of time, your focus will lead to exponential results. You will get far better results when you invest your time and effort doing what you excel at.

Think about it this way:

Would you rather magnify your strengths or your weaknesses?

What would be the long-term consequences of doing one versus the other?

The following questions will help you discover your biggest strengths and your unique abilities:

8. When you are the happiest at work, what are you doing?

You may love your job or hate it, but there will probably be times when you feel happy and engaged in the tasks you perform. Over the coming week, start noticing these moments. What are you doing specifically? And what does this say about your strengths and passions?

9. What do you find so easy that you genuinely wonder why others struggle to do the same thing?

Perhaps your communication skills are excellent. Perhaps you're a great listener. Perhaps you can explain complex topics in simple terms. However, because these skills come so easily to you, you may not see them as important attributes.

From experience, I can tell you, if every day feels like a struggle, you're probably not acting from your strengths. If this is the case with you, spend extra time identifying your strengths. Then, act on them and things will become easier.

10. What do people around you say you're great at?

What do other people compliment you on? What do they say you're good at? It's often easier for people who know you to identify your strengths than it is for you to do it yourself. This is because you have many blind spots and need an external point of view. One thing you can do is send a message to your family, friends, and colleagues and ask them to share what they think your biggest strengths are. If necessary, you could use the template below:

Hi _____,

How are you?

I'm trying to identify my strengths so I can use them to design a more fulfilling career and life. I need your perspective on what you consider I am really good at.

I'd really appreciate if you could provide me with honest feedback and give me a list of the strengths you think I have.

Please don't be afraid to tell me anything that comes to mind.

Thanks so much for your support.

Warm regards,

Your Name

For instance, several people have told me that I have a gift for making difficult concepts easy to understand. I could have chosen not to make any further effort to improve my craft. However, this is not what I chose to do. On the contrary, I decided to focus on this “gift” and hone my skills until I become the best I can be.

Below are two comments I received from my readers in this regard:

“You have a great gift for synthesizing information into pure crystal clarity.”

“You have the gift of presenting this subject in the simplest of terms, which I am finding quite profound.”

What about you? What are your special gifts?

C. Uncovering your passion

Do you know what you're passionate about? If not, this section will help you identify your passions. Make sure you take enough time to answer the following questions fully.

11. What did you enjoy doing when you were a kid?

Often, what we did when we were kids reveals certain aspects of our personality. As time passes, we tend to become distracted by life (school, sport, or video games). As a kid, I used to read a lot. Sometimes, I read throughout the day. When I was eight, I used to write short stories. Ironically, it took me over twenty years to return to writing, which is something I would never have predicted.

It's your turn now. What did you enjoy doing when you were a kid?

12. Who do you envy and why?

Being envious of other people generally means they have something you want. I used to be jealous of successful personal development bloggers. I wanted to do the same thing they were doing. This led me to start a personal development blog and later to write books like this one.

So, who do you envy and what are these people doing? What do they have that you want, and what does this say about your passions?

13. If you had all the time and money in the world, what would you do?

This question removes issues most people have, like lack of time and money. It also gives you an opportunity to think about what you want to do more creatively and without boundaries. Most people believe that if they had tons of money, they would retire and live happily ever after. However, in truth, they would most likely grow bored and would need to find activities that bring them fulfillment, lest they end up unhappy with their so-called perfect life.

What about you? What would you do in such a situation?

14. If you had complete confidence and were already your absolute best self, what would you be doing with your life?

This question helps remove any sense of limiting fear, and it can also help you find clarity on what you really want to do. Remember, your best self is already within you. As you start believing in yourself and envisioning who you want to be, you'll begin to act differently. So, what does the confident you look like and what is he or she doing?

15. How do you want to express yourself to the world?

Do you want to entertain, educate, inspire, heal, teach or create? What emotions do you want people to feel as a result of the work you're doing? This question helps clarify your means of expression and how you want to serve the world.

In the end, I believe we are all here to express ourselves fully. Discovering our passion means expressing ourselves in an authentic way and sharing our gifts with the world.

What is your gift and how do you want to share it?

* * *

Action step

Using your action guide, answer the questions above. If you can't answer all of them today, that's fine. Just do your best. You can revisit them later and refine your answers as necessary.

DAY 2—GAINING CLARITY REGARDING WHAT YOU WANT

Lack of clarity is the primary reason for failure in business and personal life.

— BRIAN TRACY, AUTHOR.

Hopefully, by now, you should have a little more clarity regarding your long-term goals. If not, don't worry. Creating a vision is an on-going process that may require many repetitions.

Today, let's look at your current goals and assess how well they fit into the bigger picture. To do so, using your action guide, write down your career goals, financial goals, relationship goals, health goals, and personal goals.

Now, are these goals what you really, really want? Or are they goals imposed on you by your external environment (peer pressure, expectations from your parents, et cetera)?

Many people unknowingly pursue goals that aren't theirs, and they pursue them for the wrong reasons.

Love-based vs. fear-based goals

A simple model you can use to identify whether you're doing the right thing is the love-based vs. fear-based model. At any time, we're either acting out of love or out of fear.

When we act out of love, our focus is on giving. We're trying to add something to the world by giving our time, money, or

attention, or by sharing our knowledge and attempting to help others.

On the other hand, when we act out of fear, our focus is on *getting*. We're trying to take something from the world. We want to take other people's money, use their work and pick their brains without giving anything in return. Or we seek to acquire fame or *get* that person we fancy.

At a deeper level, love-based behaviors come from a place of abundance. When we act out of love, we communicate to the world that we have enough, we are enough and we are happy to contribute to the world around us. Conversely, fear-based behaviors come from a place of scarcity. When we act out of fear, we tell the world (and ourselves) that we aren't enough and we don't have enough, therefore we must take as much from the world around us as we can before it's too late. When we do so, we are being controlled by ego.

Because fear-based goals are an attempt to *get* fulfillment and validation from the external world, they make for poor goals. On the other hand, love-based goals come from within and, as such, they are much more powerful. They enable us to express ourselves and share with the world who we truly are and what we believe in.

For example, acting out of love could be working on something you enjoy with the intent of helping other people. Acting out of fear could be pursuing a goal in order to impress other people. See the difference? It's hugely important.

Now, it's never one or the other. In truth, we tend to alternate between fear-based and loved-based behaviors throughout our day. Accordingly, don't beat yourself up if you catch yourself acting out of fear. Notice it and try to refocus on love-based behavior.

So, are your current goals really yours? Are they allowing you to express yourself fully, or are they an attempt to win other people's approval?

* * *

Action step

Using your action guide, write down what you really want to achieve. Make sure it is aligned with your personality and values, and that it genuinely excites you. Imagine you didn't have to please anybody and didn't need to become famous or look cool. In this case, what goals would you go after?

Imagine you could never share your accomplishments with anybody else, what goals would make you proud of yourself regardless?

DAY 3—GAINING CLARITY REGARDING WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

It's a lack of clarity that creates chaos and frustration.
Those emotions are poison to any living goal.

— STEVE MARABOLI, WRITER.

Put simply, achieving a goal is about closing the gap between where you are and where you want to be. The key question then is, how do you do close the gap as quickly and effectively as possible? There's no point in wasting your time by focusing on ineffective tasks or adopting poor strategies. You want each of your actions to be impactful and move the needle forward, don't you?

Assess where you are right now

A great question I like to ask myself is:

“If I keep doing what I'm doing today, this week, or this month, am I likely to achieve my goals?”

I know that if the answer is “no” for too many days, I need to do something to change the situation. I need to refine my strategy and ensure that I'm working on the right things each day. Otherwise, I will never reach my final destination.

While this may seem common sense (and it is), many people fail to work on the key tasks that will help them achieve their goals. The main reason is that these tasks are usually the most challenging ones. As a result, they'd rather do anything else but tackle them.

Below are some key questions to ask yourself:

- Am I really working on the challenging tasks I know I should be working on?
- If so, am I doing it consistently?
- Do I actually know what I need to do to reach my goals?

If your answer to these questions is no, let's work on it today.

* * *

Action step

Select a major goal you want to focus on. Now, ask yourself: If I keep doing what I've been doing today or this week, will I achieve this goal? If not, what do I need to change? Write down your answer using your action guide.

Then, come up with a specific strategy to achieve that goal. To do so, consider the following:

- Who has achieved a similar goal already?
- Is there a book or course I could access to help me achieve my goal?
- What few things should I focus on to reach my goal?

Do your best to answer the above questions. You can keep revising your strategy over time. Remember, you cannot achieve a goal if you don't know the steps you need to follow to reach it.

To learn how to be more strategic with your goals in greater depth, refer to the next book in this series, **Book 4**, *Strategic Mindset*.

DAY 4—GAINING CLARITY REGARDING HOW IT NEEDS TO BE DONE

Clarity affords focus.

— THOMAS LEONARD, LIFE COACH.

Many people fail to achieve their goals, not because they don't work hard enough, but because their strategy is inaccurate, unclear or plain wrong. To increase the odds of reaching any goal in life, you must develop what I call "an accurate model of reality". In other words, you must strive to make correct assumptions that will help you take the right actions and obtain the desired results. If your assumptions are inaccurate, you either won't be able to achieve tangible results or will have to work significantly harder to do so.

As a writer, I see many of my peers wasting time on ineffective tasks as a result of holding the wrong assumptions. For instance, one assumption often relayed by so-called marketing gurus is the idea that authors should be everywhere. If you're continuously promoting your books, you'll end up selling a lot of them, right? Therefore, you should seize every opportunity to market your books by:

- Advertising your books on Amazon, Facebook, or Instagram,
- Giving podcast interviews,
- Having a social media presence on YouTube, Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram, TikTok, and more,

- Organizing seminars or webinars,
- Organizing book launch parties,
- Partnering with other authors, and so on.

While there is nothing wrong with any of the activities above, it doesn't mean that you, as an author, should be doing all of them.

Considering how competitive the online space is, as an aspiring writer with few resources and limited time, there is no way you can do all the things above.

But the real lesson is that you shouldn't even try to do them all.

Strategically speaking it doesn't make sense. In truth, you should clearly define your strategy and goals as a writer (or an artist, or a musician). Then, you should decide the most effective moves for you based on your situation, the resources available (how much time and/or money you have), and your personal preferences (whether you're an introvert or extrovert).

1. The 80/20 Principle

When it comes to productivity, one key thing to understand is The 80/20 Principle, which states that twenty percent of your actions will generate eighty percent of your results. Of course, it's not an exact science, but it works for almost anything in varying degrees. Perhaps just one percent of your output creates fifty percent of your results. Or perhaps, thirty percent of your actions account for ninety percent of your outcome. The real key is to identify your high-impact tasks.

For instance, despite what book marketers recommend, I only focus on a few activities. I'm barely active on social media, and I haven't posted anything on Facebook, LinkedIn, or Twitter for months. I sometimes give interviews, but only rarely. And I don't try to sell my books at events.

Here's what has been working for me:

- Writing books consistently,

- Advertising them mostly using Amazon ads, and
- Building an email list of readers.

That's it.

Now, I'm not saying this is what every author should do. I'm just saying that this is what works for me, and for any author, there are probably a few activities that will work very well.

If they try to do everything, their actions will have little power and they won't be able to generate enough traction to gain the visibility and momentum needed to sell many books.

Here is one of my favorite quotes by the marketer, Seth Godin, "*A woodpecker can tap twenty times on a thousand trees and get nowhere but stay busy. Or he can tap twenty thousand times on one tree and get dinner.*"

If you're feeling overwhelmed, jumping from one activity to the next, but never achieving tangible results, it's probably because you've been ignoring The 80/20 Principle.

2. Strategy vs. tactic

Another major trap is to mistake tactics for strategies. These are *not* the same thing and understanding the difference between the two is critical.

A strategy is a carefully crafted set of tactics that, when combined, lead to the achievement of a specific goal. A good strategy implies that each tactic must work synergistically in a way that dramatically increases the odds of success.

On the other hand, a tactic is a specific action that is part of an overall strategy. That is, a tactic shouldn't be taken independently. Its effectiveness comes from being combined intelligently with other tactics that are part of the same overall strategy.

The point is a tactic must always be considered as part of a strategy. Many people use one tactic after the next without having identified a clear strategy first. This is a big mistake.

For instance, new authors hearing a book marketer recommending Instagram, may open their account right away.

Or they may create Facebook ads right after seeing an author having tremendous success with them. And they will keep trying new tactics over and over. Unfortunately, it is highly unlikely they'll succeed by using this scattergun method. Most people act this way because they believe there is a magic pill, and to be successful, all they need to do is find it.

Instead, an author with a sound strategy will be much more deliberate. For instance, they may decide to create an ongoing series and put most of their marketing effort into promoting the first book in the series. Then, they may choose to focus on running Facebook ads, optimizing their ads relentlessly until they're profitable.

Or imagine you want to run your own restaurant. You must have a solid strategy so you can choose effective tactics aligned with that strategy. Just mixing tactics you've heard from other restaurant owners won't work.

Instead, you would ask yourself, what type of restaurant will you open? A fast food or a high-end restaurant? How will you differentiate yourself from your competitors? Will you offer an outstanding service? Stunning ambiance? A large variety of dishes? And how will you attract customers?

Of course, you may need to experiment before you find what works best for your particular business. But make sure that, once you do, you also identify the key tactics that form part of this strategy. Then, at all costs, avoid being distracted by anything not part of the overall strategy.

3. Have one business model

Another common issue is trying to implement multiple business models at once. For example, many non-fiction writers lack clarity regarding what they want their books to do for their business. For example:

- Do they want to make money directly from their books?
- Do they want to use their books as a tool to promote their training courses or coaching services?

- Do they want to use their books to build their credibility?
- Do they want to land paid speaking gigs?

If, to begin with, they don't choose one strategy, they are likely to scatter their effort and struggle to have any kind of success.

Personally, I chose to make money with my books relying mostly on Amazon. This suggests that I must write books consistently and advertise them effectively via Amazon ads. If I had chosen to use my books to sell courses or coaching services, I would have acted differently. I would have spent a lot of time creating an effective sales funnel and would have likely written fewer books.

Now, does this mean you cannot do several of the above? No, of course not, but I would recommend that you focus on one specific business model and stick to it. Once you achieve the desired results, you might be able to implement one more. This is especially true if you have the money to outsource certain tasks or build a team. But start with one model.

Obviously, I'm giving you these examples because, as a writer, it's what I know best, but the same logic applies for any other business idea or goal you want to pursue.

What about you? Are you trying to pursue several business models or strategies at once? If so, how could you revise your strategy to increase its effectiveness?

4. Get rid of feel-good activities

Do you spend most of your time and effort on your most impactful tasks or do you allow yourself to get distracted by ineffective tasks?

Many people work hard to avoid hard work. What's the difference you may ask?

Working hard means keeping yourself busy, trying to complete as many tasks as possible. On the other hand, doing hard work means focusing most of your time and effort on the difficult tasks that move the needle. People who can perform hard work

consistently will achieve great results. People who merely work hard may not.

To develop deep focus and achieve most of your goals, you must separate the two. You must be especially wary of doing what I call “feel-good activities”.

Feel-good activities are activities that give you the illusion you’re making progress (when you aren’t). We often engage in such activities as a way to avoid facing the hard work. It’s a sort of hidden procrastination.

Some examples of feel-good activities could be:

- Spending hours tweaking your company logo,
- Working on ineffective tasks that have little to no impact, and
- Working on projects that don’t fit into your overall strategy.

Feel-good activities give you the impression of moving forward. As such, they are a major trap. But what you want isn’t to feel good by completing minor tasks—it is to feel great by completing major tasks.

Below are some examples of what I mean by hard work:

- Cold-calling clients to land new contracts that will increase your revenue.
- Writing books that will attract new readers and increase your sales.
- Attracting coaching clients that will increase your bottom line.
- Working on improving your key products or services to deliver more value to your customers.
- Improving your sales page or sales pitch to boost conversion.

I believe that deep down, you’ll almost always know what you *should* be doing. You’re just too afraid of doing it so you distract yourself in all sorts of ways. But I would challenge

you to stop working hard and start doing hard work instead. Yes, hard work *is* more demanding. It will use more of your mental energy, and it might be scary at times. However, as you practice doing hard work consistently, you'll see your results skyrocket.

5. Reduce your learning curve

Time is one of our scarcest resources. As such, you don't have time to reinvent the wheel. Whatever you want to accomplish, you must find ways to do it better and faster—more effectively. The better your blueprint is, the more you can direct your focus toward the most efficient activities and work on them consistently.

Here are the two things you need to focus on to reduce the learning curve:

1. Find the right information relevant to what you're trying to do or learn, and
2. Get help from people who've already achieved your goals (or similar ones).

In truth, whatever you're trying to achieve, there are people out there who've done it before. Learn from them.

1) Find the right information

To achieve the desired results, you must act on the right information, but in a world flooded with information, this is easier said than done. The first step to finding the correct information is to define your learning goals as clearly as possible. This entails knowing:

- **What exactly you're trying to learn.** To stay focused, keep in mind what you're trying to do. Make sure the tasks you're working on are important. Whenever you need to do research, clearly define the scope of your research to avoid overlearning and distractions.
- **Why exactly you need to learn it.** Before you tackle a task, ask yourself why you're doing it. How does it fit the big picture? Is it the best way to move closer to your goals?
- **What you want the final result to look like.** Define in detail what you want the final result to look like. This will ensure you approach your tasks or project the right way.

2) Get help from people who've already achieved your goals

There are people out there who have already achieved the same goals you're targeting. There is no need to try to work it all out on your own.

You can interview these people, read their books or consume their content. As you do so, try to identify the blueprint you need to follow to reach your goal.

If you know someone who has already achieved your goals, I encourage you to "interview" him or her. Ask the following questions:

- What was your learning strategy?
- What was your single most effective activity?
- What did you struggle with the most and how did you overcome it?
- If you needed to learn that skill all over again, what would you do differently today?
- If you were in my shoes, how would you go about learning it?
- Is there anything else I should know?

The answers to these questions should help you create a significantly more effective plan.

Remember, to develop deep focus, you must know what to focus on. Asking people who have been and there done that is an effective way to do so.

PART II

ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS AND OBSTACLES

How many hours do you work every week? While the typical workweek is forty hours, nobody actually works that amount of time. Most employees work fifteen to twenty hours at best.

In 2017, a study conducted by Voucher Cloud—a major UK money-saving brand—revealed that the average UK office worker is productive for only two hours and fifty-three minutes each day (or about one third of the time spent at the office). And this is likely to be the same for office workers all over the world.

The point is, these days most office workers are continuously distracted and have very little time each day to focus. Usually, they waste a lot of time by:

- Checking their emails or going on social media,
- Working on unimportant tasks that have little to no impact on their productivity, and
- Being continuously interrupted during their day.

To develop deep focus, you must eliminate distractions and remove any obstacle that prevents you from developing a deep state of concentration. As you learn to develop deep focus, you'll significantly increase your productivity, and often beyond anything you can imagine.

The first thing to boost focus is to simply stop doing as many unproductive activities as possible. Let's see how you can do this.

DAY 5—SIMPLIFYING

The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak.

— HANS HOFMANN, PAINTER.

1. Practice ruthless elimination

To simplify your day, you must practice what I call “ruthless elimination”. You need to eliminate the things that don’t truly matter so that only the key tasks remain.

A. Practice zero-based thinking

An effective way to practice “ruthless elimination” is to use zero-based thinking, which is a technique that enables you to identify unproductive activities and remove them from your schedule. To use this technique, simply answer the questions below:

Knowing what I know now, would I choose to start that activity today?

For example:

- Knowing what I know now, would I still start this project?
- Knowing what I know now, would I still join that group?
- Knowing what I know now, would I still create that product or service?

You must understand that everyone makes choices every day. Whatever activity, goal, or project you're working on, you're recommitting to it each day whether you're aware of it or not. Now, there's no rule saying that you can't eliminate certain activities and replace them with more effective or enjoyable ones, but it may not always seem that way if you've been involved in them for a long time.

For instance, perhaps, you run a book club, sit on a committee, or volunteer at your local church. These may be great and even charitable endeavors, but they may not be what you want to do anymore. Sometimes, the hardest thing to do is to let go of something good, to let yourself pursue something great. Do you still want to continue with the activity you've been pursuing for years? Is it the most important use of your time right now or could there a better and more fulfilling way for you to use your precious time?

Only you can answer these questions. Only you can choose what you really want to focus on, moving forward. The key is to be totally honest with yourself.

A cognitive bias called the "sunk cost fallacy" explains why we act this way. Having already spent so much time or effort on something, we find it hard to let go and move on. But such attachment to the past often prevents us from designing a better future. It traps our energy into activities that no longer make us happy or productive.

One of my friends, who is also a writer, struggles with this issue. While he's very creative and has a lot of ideas for future books, he finds himself stuck in the past, using tons of energy revising older books, hoping to increase his sales. As a result,

he has begun to feel overwhelmed and unmotivated. This is because he fails to focus his creative energy on future projects.

I'm the opposite. I seldom go back and try to turn an unsuccessful book around. Instead, I accept that some books will not sell no matter how much time and effort I put into them. I let go and use my energy to create more books. Now, I'm not saying this is always the best thing to do. There may be a time when revisiting and improving past projects might be worth it, but it often isn't the case.

The same thing can be said of any activity or project. Understand that when you give your time and energy to an activity, you're implicitly recommitting to it every day. If it's not what you want to do, then it might be time to eliminate it, to free up energy, and move on.

B. Blank slate technique

Another technique you can use is the "blank slate technique". Usually, when we try to simplify our schedule, we look at all our activities, trying to identify which ones to eliminate. Now, the blank slate technique entails doing the opposite—it entails identifying the tasks you should add to your schedule.

To apply this technique, recreate your schedule from scratch. Imagine it is blank and ask yourself what you would add to it. Weigh each activity carefully and only add the vital ones. Consider it your minimum viable schedule.

To give you an analogy, my computer recently broke down and I had to buy a new one. Now, I could have transferred all the files to my new computer, but I choose not to. Instead, I decided only to add the files I'm actually using. In short, I chose to start from a blank slate and used it as an opportunity to reorganize my files.

What about you? If you had total permission to eliminate any activities you don't want to dedicate time to anymore and could implement the most minimalist schedule possible, what would it look like?

C. Learning to say no

Another way to eliminate activities and free time is “simply” by learning to say no more often. Time is one of your most precious assets and nobody is entitled to it but you. Interestingly, while time is more valuable than money, people act as though the opposite applies. They give their time freely and let others interrupt them, but they would never give their money away to whoever asked for it, would they?

Learning to say no is a sign of self-respect. It means you respect yourself enough to focus on things that truly matter to you while saying no to less important activities.

If you struggle to say no, consider the following:

1. Your life is made up of time. Whenever someone “borrows” your time, they’re stealing a part of your life. Remember that nobody has the right to steal your time without your consent. Of course, it doesn’t mean you can, or should, say no to everything and never help others, but it does mean that you should be more selective and that you must learn to value your time more than anything else.

2. Your time must be used in a meaningful way. When you say yes to everything, you’re disrespecting yourself and neglecting your goals and values. As a result, you end up living a life far below your potential, and you fail to give your gifts to the world and express yourself the way you were supposed to. To make it easier to decline requests, refine your vision, and identify your core values. Doing so will help you weigh each request for your time carefully and assess whether you should accept or decline them.

Below are some techniques to help you say no:

Make “no” your default answer. For most people, the default answer is “yes”. They only say no when they muster enough courage to do so. I encourage you to do the opposite and say “no” by default. Then, assess each request carefully. If the request is aligned with your goals or values, or if it excites you, say yes. If not, consider declining the request.

Know what you value and broadcast it to the world. When you clearly know what’s important to you, saying no will become easier. For instance, in a conversation, don’t be afraid

to mention that you promised to spend time with your kids or that you need to work on an important project. It's hard for people to argue against the things you value the most. How could they say that spending time with your kids isn't important or that your important project can wait? Occasionally, they may have to wait, but most often they won't. Also, the more you live by your values, the more people will respect you—and your time.

Practice saying no unapologetically. Many of us feel bad for rejecting someone's invitation and can't help justifying ourselves. I challenge you to say no *without* trying to justify yourself. For instance, you could say something like, "Thank you for the invitation but I'll pass this time."

Practice role-playing. Whenever you're thinking of declining a future request, role-play the whole situation either on your own, or (if you can) with someone else. To do so, visualize the actual situation and imagine what the person asking you for something would say. See them asking you to join a party, take on a project or help them out with something. Then, say out loud what you will tell them. You can also write your answer down.

When declining an invitation, you can use one or more of the following tactics:

- **Acknowledge their invitation.** For instance, you could say, "Sounds like fun but I'm afraid I have to pass this time".
- **Give a specific reason.** While you don't necessarily have to justify yourself, on some occasions, such as at work, it might be effective to mention a specific reason. For instance, you could say, "I can't work on it now because I have an important deadline and I'm already struggling for time."
- **Give a reason they can't argue with.** As we've seen before, it's hard for people to challenge your values or mission. For example, you could say, "Sounds like a good idea, but I promised my kids I'd spend time with them tonight. I'll have to pass this time but have fun."

- **Offer an alternative.** If you genuinely want to spend time with the person making the request, you can offer an alternative that will work better for you. For example, you could say, “I can’t join the party tonight, but what about grabbing a coffee later this week?”

Be hard to reach. Many people willingly accept being interrupted many times during the day. They seem to be available to everyone who contacts them. By doing so, they’re effectively telling others their time doesn’t matter, that they’re not up to big things. And because they have little respect for their own time, people will see them as having little respect for themselves. Therefore, instead of reacting to people around you, set your own rules and reach out to others when you choose to. For instance, I never answer my phone unless I know the number. And even so, I may not answer if it’s during my peak hours in the morning. In fact, the other day, I received a call from a friend but didn’t answer because I was writing. Some might say I was being rude, but when I returned my friend’s call later, he understood my reason.

The point is, saying no is your right. In fact, the most successful people on this planet say no to almost everything. If you can’t say no right now, how will you say no when you become more successful?

2. Minimize distraction

Distractions destroy your focus, making you far less competent than you really are. To develop laser-sharp focus you must eliminate or at least minimize all your distractions. We can differentiate two types of distractions as follows:

- Internal distractions, and
- External distractions.

Let’s look at each one briefly.

A. Internal distractions

How often are you distracted and procrastinate due to a thought? Probably more often than you realize. Perhaps, it is the thought that you should reply to an email you forgot to answer. Perhaps it is the thought that you have time and can do that task later. Or perhaps it is the thought that you want to have a coffee or go for a walk.

When you work on complex tasks, your mental chatter is often your biggest enemy. You can always find excuses to do everything but the tasks that truly matter. So, how do you make your mental chatter work for you, not against you? One effective way to do so is to implement a daily morning routine. The point of such routines is to lower your level of stimulation and train your mind to work on challenging tasks. To do so you should:

Avoid distractions wherever possible. Don't start your day by checking your phone, going on the internet, or watching videos. These are highly stimulating activities. Once you engage in them, you'll have a tough time focusing on your most important tasks. Your mind will keep telling you that you can work on the difficult tasks later, steering you toward more exciting (and easier) tasks.

Engage in relaxing activities. Put yourself in a calmer and more focused state of mind. There are many ways to do this, but they include:

- Practicing deep, slow breathing,
- Meditating,
- Listening to relaxing music,
- Practicing mindfulness, and
- Stretching.

Then, begin working on your most important task.

Eliminate highly distracting tasks. To enhance your focus, identify the tasks that have the most “distracting power” for you. For me, it's YouTube.

While most people seek to add more things to their day, I would suggest that the opposite is more beneficial. I contend

that deep focus (and high-level productivity) only occurs when there is nothing more to add. Once you've eliminated most distractions and put yourself in a focused state, you'll become much more productive.

B. External distractions

While internal distractions are self-created, external distractions are the result of your external environment. The more you optimize your external environment to avoid interruptions, the better your focus will be. External distractions are interruptions include:

- Phone and social media notifications,
- Phone calls,
- Colleagues dropping by your office for a chat,
- General noise, or
- A disorganized workspace.

It is impossible to focus if you're continuously being interrupted. To reduce external distractions, eliminate interruptions as much as possible. For example, you can block time to work on your key task while asking others not to disturb you. You can arrive at the office early, before your colleagues. Or, if you work from home, you can work while everyone else in your family is asleep.

In addition, make sure you remove any notifications on your phone. You can also ask your colleagues not to disturb during certain hours of the day or you can wear headphones to signal you're busy. Whatever works for you is fine but strive to get rid of external distractions at all costs. This is how you'll develop deep focus.

* * *

Action step

Complete the following exercises in your action guide:

1. Practice ruthless elimination

A. Practice zero-based thinking

- Make a list of all the activities you're engaging in in a typical week.
- Then, ask yourself the following question: Knowing what I know now, would I still engage in this activity? You can also do the same for projects you're working on, products or services you're offering, and so on.

B. Implement the blank slate technique

Imagine you could create your schedule from scratch while having the total freedom to eliminate any activity you wish. Write down in your action guide what your new minimalist schedule would look like.

C. Learning to say no

Using your action guide, write down what you could say "no" to next time and how exactly you'll decline the request.

2. Minimize distraction

A. Internal distractions

In your action guide, write down two or three specific things you will do to reduce internal distractions.

B. External distractions

In your action guide, write down two or three specific things you will do to reduce external distractions.

DAY 6—REDUCING USELESS INPUT

The art of being wise is the art of knowing what to overlook.

— WILLIAM JAMES, PHILOSOPHER.

Do you often feel overwhelmed, not knowing where to start? Do you feel stuck, unable to move forward with your tasks or projects?

If so, it's probably because you're absorbing too much unnecessary information. Sure, learning is important, but when you're spending too much time learning, you'll end up feeling overwhelmed and confused.

By learning more and digging ever deeper, you'll:

- Get lost in detail, losing sight of the big picture (missing the forest for the trees). Instead of having a decent grasp of the overall picture, you'll find yourself reading highly technical reports full of stats and anecdotes that you probably don't need to know. Ironically, as you keep doing so, you'll often end up absorbing less and less of the essence of what you're trying to learn.
- Lose confidence. As you keep researching, you'll realize how little you know and risk experiencing more intense feelings of inadequacy, which will prevent you from taking action.

- Come across opposing views and conflicting ideas, which will make the decision-making process much more complicated. Of course, this is not a bad thing per se, and depending on what you are studying, you might need to dig deeper. However, in many cases, you don't need to know all the details to make a decision. The less important the decision is, the less research you probably need to do.

To cultivate deep focus, you must dramatically reduce useless input. Otherwise, you'll suffer from what is often referred to as "information overload" which will usually lead to "analysis paralysis".

1. How to avoid information overload

Information overload is simply the act of consuming more information than you need. Of course, we all consume information we don't necessarily use right away, if ever. However, if you go too far in that direction by consuming too much information too quickly, you'll probably start feeling overwhelmed.

The key is to consume the right amount of information to meet your needs. For instance, a doctorate student will need to consume far more information than an employee asked to write a brief report for their boss.

When you find yourself searching for information, I invite you to do the following:

A. Determine exactly what you're trying to learn or accomplish.

If you don't know why you're consuming information, you'll end up spending too much time looking for data you don't need in the first place. On the other hand, once you know what you need, you'll be able to:

- Search for the information in the right place and under the right format (books, articles, videos, reports, et cetera),

- Identify the people who are likely to have the information you need, and
- Decide exactly the amount of information you'll consume and for how long.

Many people are caught in the trap of learning or researching more than they need to. One reason for this is that it feels good to learn new things. It gives people what is sometimes referred to as “the illusion of competence”. As we consume more and more information, we start believing that we are becoming smarter and more competent. However, this is often not true. In most cases, we need to act on what we learn to achieve the results we desire. By doing so, we're able to convert theoretical knowledge into practical wisdom.

Now, let me give you some examples of information overload.

First, let's start with a personal example—book writing. Writing a book can take anywhere from a few weeks to a few years. It all depends on the length of the book and the reason we're writing it. A researcher might need to spend years before they can write a book in their field. On the other hand, an expert who wants to write a short practical guide to offer to potential clients may be able to do so within a few weeks, considering they already have the knowledge and just need to put it into a book.

When I write a book, I keep in mind what I'm trying to accomplish with it. I might first write a simple outline to help determine the information I want to cover. Then, I will do some research as needed. Finally, I will set a specific deadline for the project. By doing so, it will automatically reduce the scope and force me to be smart with the way I spend my time.

On the other hand, if I read book after book for research, I will quickly feel overwhelmed. Encountering too many irrelevant details, I will lose sight of the overall picture and make writing more challenging. Therefore, whenever I start feeling overwhelmed, it's usually a sign of information overload. In which case, I stop and take a step back.

Now, let's say you want to learn a foreign language. If so, you need to define why you want to learn it. Is it to read books in

that language? Is it to have a conversation with your friends? Or is it to use it at work?

Based on your needs, you must then adopt your learning strategy. If you want to have a conversation in that language, this is what you should focus on. You don't need to read all the grammar books available. You can simply hire a teacher and find a language exchange partner to meet every week. Then, later on, if you feel the need to fine-tune your skills, you might buy a book on grammar.

The point being, information overload comes from a lack of clarity regarding what you're trying to learn or achieve. Gain clarity on that and plan accordingly. This way, you'll become much more productive.

B. Reverse your learning-to-action ratio.

Most people spend way too much time consuming and not enough time implementing. In short, there is a lot of input, but not much output. To boost your productivity, you must learn to reverse your learning-to-action ratio. That is, you must act more and study less. This alone will make a massive difference in your life. By taking more action you'll:

- Have much more clarity regarding what needs to be done. As a result, you'll be less likely to suffer from information overload and analysis paralysis,
- Learn faster by receiving more feedback,
- Accomplish more, and
- Feel better about yourself for achieving your goals.

I invite you to take a step back and look at your learning vs. action ratio. Of course, how much you need to learn as opposed to taking action will depend on the task at hand. However, you can always take more action. Taking action toward your goals is one of the best cures against information overload.

Tip:

Stop learning for thirty days. If you find yourself taking on too much new information, stop studying anything new for the

next thirty days. Don't read any new books. Instead, take as much action as you can, using what you've already learned.

* * *

Action step

Using your action guide, write down your weekly activities. Then separate them into two categories: learning and doing. Finally, write down at least one thing you could be doing (or stop doing) to reduce the input (i.e., what you learn), and increase the output (i.e., what you produce) instead.

DAY 7—ELIMINATING FRICTION AND ENERGY WASTE

Clutter is not just the stuff on your floor—it’s anything that stands between you and the life you want to be living.

— PETER WALSH, RECORD PRODUCER.

To deepen your focus, you must remove any unnecessary friction and prevent energy waste as best you can. Whatever you’re trying to focus on, you’ll often experience resistance, especially when that task is truly important. For example, writers sometimes experience writer’s block. They may have all the time in the world to write, yet they do anything but write. I’ve written over twenty books, and I still experience resistance (though I’m much better at overcoming it these days).

Put simply, “eliminating friction” means making undesirable behaviors or activities as difficult as possible to engage in, while making desirable ones as easy as possible to perform.

As for eliminating “energy waste”, it means lowering the switching costs between tasks and making the transition from one task to another as smooth and easy as possible.

Let’s work on eliminating friction first, shall we?

1. Eliminating friction

What prevents you from focusing on your most important task right now? How much willpower is required to begin working

on it? Our brain is energy efficient and doesn't like to make any unnecessary effort. Consequently, to reduce the risk of becoming distracted and procrastinating, you must make the tasks you want to work on, the default choice. That is, they must be easy to get into. Conversely, you want to make unproductive tasks much more difficult to start.

To give you an example, if you put your favorite cake on your desk within easy reach, you'll end up eating it at some point during the day (probably sooner than later). But if you have to leave the house and traipse all the way to the supermarket to buy it, there will be much more friction and you'll be less likely to eat the scrummy delight.

The same thing goes for major tasks you want to focus on. For instance, if you want to write, some ways to reduce friction are:

- Writing first thing in the morning, before doing anything else (eating breakfast or taking a shower),
- Making your file on your computer accessible in one click, or even better, leaving it open so that it's the first thing you see when you wake up your computer, or
- Writing in a distraction-free environment.

These actions will reduce friction significantly and make it much easier for you to actually write.

Now, you also want to make it harder to engage in any other activities that distract you from your main tasks. To do so you could:

- Turn off your Wi-Fi,
- Put your phone on airplane mode, and/or
- Use a timer.

Finally, as we mentioned before, you can implement a daily ritual to put yourself in the right state of mind and condition yourself to write (or do anything else that you want to work on). As I'm writing this, I'm listening to relaxing music using

headphones. And before I start writing, I perform a simple morning routine that consists of drinking water and taking some vitamins before sitting at my desk. I sometimes use a timer as well.

The point is, the more you condition your mind through daily routines, the easier it will be to tackle your task. As you build a solid habit of doing your hard work daily, it will become easier and easier. Sure, you'll still "relapse" occasionally, but at least you'll have the tools that will help you return to work whenever you need it.

Now, let's see how you can eliminate energy waste.

2. Eliminating energy waste

Our mind is often looking for ways to avoid hard work. Whenever we perceive a task as challenging, we can experience resistance. We may doubt our ability to complete it effectively, or we may be afraid the pay-off won't be there (e.g., what if my book doesn't sell?). As a result, the more we give our brain room to think, the more it will succeed in convincing us not to do the work. It will tell us things such as:

- We can always do it later.
- Let's just check our emails first.
- We should do more research. I don't feel completely ready, do you?
- I feel like having a coffee, do you?

Sound familiar?

To avoid such issues, you must give less room for your mind to trick you into lethargy. One effective strategy is to plan your day effectively. By knowing what your key priorities are, you are less likely to be distracted. You'll start to notice whenever your mind tries to steer you away from your main work. The transition from task A to task B will also be smoother.

On the other hand, if you fail to write down your goals each day and decide what to do on the spot, you'll often end up performing make-work tasks. You'll tend to travel along the path of least resistance, letting your lazy mind decide what you

should be doing. And that's really not the way you design your ideal life.

Therefore, I recommend you dedicate time each day to planning. To do so, simply take a pen and a sheet of paper and write down the few key tasks you must focus on that day. Visualize yourself completing them. Then, commit to doing them. The simple act of writing down your key tasks each morning will do more for your productivity and focus than almost anything else you can ever do.

* * *

Action step

Using your action guide, select a task you want to work on today or tomorrow. Then, write down what you can do to remove as much friction as possible. Finally, create a simple routine to help you start work.

Plan your day by writing down on paper three tasks you'd like to complete today. Move from one task to the next deliberately and take notice of whenever your mind tries to distract you.

CONCLUSION

Your ability to focus is one of your superpowers. When you learn to focus more deeply and more consistently, your productivity will explode, and you'll find yourself accomplishing far more than you could ever have imagined.

I hope the exercises in this book have helped you enhance your focus and boost your productivity. I would strongly urge you to revisit them whenever needed. When you notice you're losing focus and becoming overly distracted, give yourself seven days to get back on track by re-reading this book and completing all the exercises.

You won't always be as focused as you'd like to be. And that's okay. But if you can be just a little more focused than most of your peers, you'll notice a major difference over time. So, if you want to attain your bigger goals, you know what you have to do!

Wishing you all the best,

Thibaut Meurisse.

OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHORS:

Crush Your Limits: Break Free from Limitations and Achieve Your True Potential

Goal Setting: The Ultimate Guide to Achieving Life-Changing Goals

Habits That Stick: The Ultimate Guide to Building Habits That Stick Once and For All

Master Your Beliefs: A Practical Guide to Stop Doubting Yourself and Build Unshakeable Confidence

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The Passion Manifesto: Escape the Rat Race, Uncover Your Passion and Design a Career and Life You Love

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Wake Up Call: How To Take Control Of Your Morning And Transform Your Life

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