

Wellness Wednesday



February 15, 2023

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9 Quick Ways To Refocus If You're Distracted At Work

It's easy to lose focus at your desk. These simple habits can help you get back on track and tackle your to-do list.

It feels like distractions are everywhere we look — our phones, our smartwatches, our email notifications — which can make it increasingly harder to focus at work.

“In my mind, maintaining focus is mostly about reducing distractions and interruptions. I call it the curse of immediacy. This is when we feel like we have to respond to every email, every instant message, every text, every meeting request the moment it arrives, which means we’re constantly pulled in a million different directions,” said Ashley Janssen, a productivity consultant at Ashley Janssen Consulting.

In other words, it’s really hard to focus when all of these interruptions are happening constantly throughout the day, she said. And, on top of that, your mind likely drifts away from work tasks that aren’t too interesting or that feel never-ending. But experts say there are things you can do to maintain your focus at work or refocus when your mind is everywhere but your office job. Here’s how to do it.



Create a ‘deep work’ ritual.

Janssen said to help get into focus mode, you can create a deep work ritual that calms your mind and body and sets you up to focus.

“The process ends up helping you set an expectation psychologically, as well as for your body, for what’s coming next. And as you do this regularly, it kind of lets you settle into the deep work faster,” she stated.

To create a deep work ritual, she said, you first need to choose an environment that fits your focus needs — like somewhere quiet and clean. Next, make sure you have items in this space that can set you up for success — like noise-canceling headphones, a warm sweater, coffee and water. Then, remove your distractions. Put your phone on silent or move the TV remote across the room.

She said to follow these steps each workday to create your deep work ritual and get yourself into that deep work flow state.

Set boundaries with co-workers.

According to CJ Bathgate, a licensed clinical psychologist at National Jewish Health, setting boundaries with your co-workers (or other people in your space, if you work from home) is crucial for focus.

“People will keep doing things until they’re told not to,” she said, and that goes for your talkative co-worker who regularly stops by your desk for a chat. As soon as they stop by, you can gently let them know that you’re in the middle of something and that you’ll get back to them when you’re done.

You can even take this one step further and create designated and agreed-on quiet time with the people in your work area, Bathgate said. This could mean setting specific hours for heads-down work every day or establishing a morning quiet hour to gear up for the day.

Janssen said if you do plan to have focus time in your calendar, you should check with your colleagues and manager to determine what types of messages, emails, and texts can be ignored for an hour — or instruct people to call you instead if they have a pressing need during your focus time.

When you are interrupted, write down what you’re doing.

Say you have a meeting you can’t miss in the middle of the day but don’t want to get back to your desk and be totally unaware of what you were working on.

In cases like this, Janssen said you should write down what you’re working on along with the next thing you planned on doing. This way, when you get back to work, you can refocus quickly and don’t have to take time searching for your place in a presentation or trying to remember what else was on the day’s to-do list.

Try the Pomodoro Technique.

“There’s something called the Pomodoro Technique and it’s this idea of breaking your time into chunks,” Bathgate said. It’s a method that’s talked about a lot in psychology, especially when you’re working on difficult tasks.

According to Bathgate, to follow the Pomodoro Technique, set a timer for 20 or 25 minutes, work on your task for that time frame, and take a five-minute break when the timer goes off. Then, after four consecutive work intervals, take a 15- to 30-minute break, she said.

Bathgate said this technique is like interval training during a workout; it allows you to do effective work but adds in breaks so the task at hand doesn’t feel as daunting.

Drink enough water.

“This may sound simple, but drinking enough water is important — when we aren’t drinking enough water our body is more fatigued,” Bathgate said. “Dehydration causes us to conserve energy.”

And when you’re conserving energy, it can be hard to focus on work because you’re tired and you’re dragging, she said.

Staying hydrated “will also make you have to use the bathroom more during the day, so it’s also forcing you to get up,” Bathgate said. “Sometimes you need to get away from whatever you’re looking at on your screen.”

Give yourself a brain break.

Speaking of getting away from your screen, if you've tried all of your go-to focus tricks, it's OK to take a step away from work for a bit — it could help you focus in the long run.

"Get away from your computer, move your body, get some water, get a snack," Janssen said. "Don't go onto another screen and scroll your phone, but actually give yourself a brain break."

She added that your brain needs time to relax throughout the day, and social media and the news will just force your brain to process more information. If you can get out in nature or get some fresh air, that's even more ideal for your break, Janssen said.

She said brain breaks should be at least 15 minutes (30 minutes is ideal) to disconnect from your workspace and screen, which makes this longer, less frequent break a different kind of respite than the Pomodoro Technique breaks mentioned above.



Focus on your breath.

"Conscious breathing is one of the best ways we can immediately ground ourselves and refocus our minds," said Cecille Ahrens, a psychotherapist and owner of Transcend Therapy in San Diego.

She added that our breath is something we can always access and that it can help regulate our nervous system, which controls your body's thoughts, and, in turn, your focus. "Just a simple three- to five-second inhale and exhale done for a couple of minutes can have a noticeable calming effect," Ahrens noted. So, the next time you feel your mind wandering, try getting your focus back by doing some intentional, paced breathing.

Control your self-talk.

According to Ahrens, it's important that you're aware of your self-talk, which she said are "the things we tell ourselves [and] the unchecked stories we have in our heads." Controlling how you talk to yourself can be the difference between a worry spiral and focused work, she noted.

"If you find yourself saying or thinking 'I'm never going to finish this,' see if you can replace it with a more supportive statement like 'I am doing my best, one day at a time,'" she said. In other words, take stock of what you're saying to yourself and decide if it's true — and don't let those false statements take charge of your mindset at work. If that happens, you'll be more likely to veer away from your to-do list and waste energy on worrying about what is ahead of you.

"The idea is to not let untrue statements rule your day," Ahrens said. Lastly, make sure you're taking care of yourself. "A lot of our focus challenges often come when we're overtired and our bodies don't feel good," Janssen said.

So, maybe you aren't sleeping enough or you're working too much or skipping meals. If you want to stay focused at work, you need to take care of your body and mind. When you aren't feeling good, your brain will be foggy and it'll be harder for you to get your work done, she said.

Self-care is important, Janssen said, so make sure you take care of yourself so you can take care of your work, too.



AIR FRYER BREAKFAST BANANA SPLIT



286 Calories | PREP TIME: 2 mins | COOK TIME: 5 mins | TOTAL TIME: 7 mins
YIELD: 1 | COURSE: Breakfast | CUISINE: American

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium ripe banana
- 2 teaspoons pure maple syrup
- ground cinnamon
- 1/2 cup nonfat Greek yogurt
- 2 tablespoons pecan halves, chopped
- optional: colored sprinkles and cherry, for topping

With just five ingredients, this delicious Air Fryer Banana Split tastes like you're having dessert for breakfast. The bananas are baked in the air fryer and topped with yogurt, maple syrup, cinnamon, and pecans. If you want to make this easy banana breakfast for kids, add some sprinkles and a cherry.

Air Fry the Banana: Slice a ripe banana lengthwise, three-quarters of the way through, and top it with cinnamon. Air fry the banana for five to six minutes at 400°F until soft.

Nutrition Information

Serving: 1 banana, Calories: 286 kcal, Carbohydrates: 41 g, Protein: 15 g, Fat: 9 g, Saturated Fat: 1 g, Cholesterol: 7 mg, Sodium: 46 mg, Fiber: 4.5 g, Sugar: 26 g
Source: Skinnytaste.com



INSTRUCTIONS



- Slice the banana lengthwise, 3/4 of the way through on the side of the banana so it doesn't roll in the air fryer and open the the skin and banana slightly.
- Top with cinnamon and air fry 400F 5 to 6 minutes, until soft.
- Meanwhile in a small bowl, combine 1 teaspoon syrup with the yogurt.
- When the banana is ready, top with yogurt, sprinkle with more cinnamon and the nuts and drizzle with the remaining 1 teaspoon maple syrup.
- Optional, top with colored sprinkles and a cherry on top.

Variations:

Drizzle the banana with chocolate syrup, almond butter, or peanut butter.

Fruit: Add fresh berries, pomegranate seeds, raisins, dried cranberries, or crushed-up freeze-dried strawberries.

Top your banana split with chocolate chips, granola, coconut chips, or coconut flakes.

Spices: Add a dash of nutmeg or cardamom, or substitute pumpkin pie spice for cinnamon.

Classic Banana Split: Make it dessert with whipped cream, chocolate syrup, sprinkles, and a cherry on top.

FEATURED EXERCISE

<https://www.self.com/gallery/beginner-kettlebell-moves>Featured Exercise ► **Hollow-Body Hold** » **Do it:**

“The hollow-body hold is a simple but very effective core exercise that is perfect for both beginners and advanced individuals. Since the person will be activating their core while on their back, they are in a safer position with a lower risk for injury. There are also so many ways to either regress or progress this exercise. For example, you can bend your knees and bring your arms in front of you to regress it, or you can hold a kettlebell over your chest to progress it. The options are endless.” —Alicia Jamison, CPT, coach at Body Space Fitness in New York City

- Lie faceup on a mat with your legs extended and arms straight over your head, keeping them close to your ears.
- Contract your abs to press your low back into the ground.
- Point your toes, squeeze your thighs together, squeeze your glutes, and lift your legs off the ground.
- Lift your shoulders off the ground and keep your head in a neutral position so that you’re not straining your neck. Your legs and mid-back should both be off the ground, and you should be in the shape of a banana, with just your low back and hips on the ground. (To make it easier, you can bring your torso up more vertically, as pictured—the move is harder the closer your back is to the ground.)
- Hold this position for a set amount of time.

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Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.



**DON'T FEAR
FAILURE. FEAR
BEING IN THE
EXACT SAME
PLACE NEXT YEAR
AS YOU ARE
TODAY.**

- Unknown

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