Digital Distraction Self-Assessment

Circle the number that most closely represents your normal behaviours regarding the statements:

\[0 = \text{Never}, \ 3 = \text{Sometimes}, \ 6 = \text{Always}\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• When interrupted from a task, I have a hard time getting back to it.</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I get irritated when others interrupt my online sessions.</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I am defensive or secretive about my technology activities.</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When trying to pay attention to something, I can be easily distracted by other things going around me.</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I get easily restless when I sit in one place for too long without access to my technology.</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I find myself doing three or more tasks at a time (e.g., checking email, talking to someone, writing).</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When someone is talking with me, I find it difficult to sustain eye contact.</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I spend my day sitting at my desk with my computer or sitting on the sofa watching TV.</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I make mistakes, misplace items, or forget important information.</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I find it difficult to relax and unwind without using technology.</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• When reading or listening to instructions, I tend to miss important details.</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People comment or complain about the time I spend on the internet, gaming, or using technology.</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I check my email or social media every few minutes throughout the day.</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I go online to escape uncomfortable feelings or situations.</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I can easily get bored if I’m engaged in only one activity.</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL:**

Add up the scores. Assess the degree of focus according to the following key:

- **75 – 90** Major issue: technology is having a negative impact on your quality of life
- **16 – 74** Moderate issue: may want to consider changing some of your habits
- **0 – 15** Not a major issue: a healthy and balanced use of technology

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## Multitasking Activity

**Multitasking is just a myth**

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 
Your Cortical Energy Reserves

What kinds of activities do you engage in that deplete your energy reserves?
The Focus Zone

Examples of activities that I do that are under-stimulating, optimal stimulating, and over-stimulating:
Managing Digital Distractions

The ability to disconnect from digital and multitasking distractions is an integral part of focusing. It’s very difficult for many people, because being connected and distracted is addictive. There are varying strategies, listed below. It is suggested you experiment, and find a method that fits your needs and situation best.

Limit time on email. Schedule pre-determined times in your day to check your email. The research suggests than checking no more than three times daily prevents addictive patterns from forming. Set a timer and give yourself 45 minutes to do email, Twitter, Facebook, IM, etc. If needed, then use an internet blocker to block these distractions for a couple of hours (up to 3-4 hours) while you focus on a single task at a time. It’s advisable not to start your workday by checking email, since it tends to through one off their focus. For example, if checking email three times a day, on could check at 10:30 am, 2:30 pm, and 4:30 pm.

Close all unnecessary applications or use blocking software. When working with a computer application, shutdown all unnecessary applications and programs (especially your email!). If you struggle with this, you can choose a software program to shut yourself off from the internet, or at least from the most distracting portions of it. For example, you can use software to block your web email, Twitter, favorite news sites, blogs, etc., or block all internet browsing entirely. Alternatively, go to your connections settings and disable temporarily, or unplug your network connector or cable, or turn off your wireless router.

Take regular breaks. The research suggests that after about 47 minutes your optimal performance begins to decline, so it a good time to take a 13 minute break away from your task (and avoid any digital device). You may find that the connected period becomes a reward for doing good, focused work.

Leave your mobile device behind, or shut-off. When you’re on the go, you don’t always need to be connected. If you’re driving, shut off your device. If you’re meeting with someone, turn off the device so you can focus on that person completely. If you’re out with your family or friends and not working, leave the device at home. You don’t need this personal time to be interrupted by work or your impulse to check on things.

Have a scheduled time to disconnect each day. It’s like setting office hours if you’re a professor — you set the times that work best for you, and you can even let people know about these times. Let’s say you are disconnected from 8-10 a.m. each day, or 4-5 p.m., or even anytime after 2 p.m. Tell people your policy, so they know you won’t be available for email or IM. And use this time to think deeply about important issues, brainstorm, or just create.
Keep your work at work. A good policy is to leave your work behind, when you’re done with work, and a better policy is to stay disconnected during that time, or work and browsing will creep into the rest of your life. Draw a line in the sand, and say, “After 5 pm (or whatever), I won't be connected, I'll focus on my family and my other priorities.” Try not to work at all at home, or if you do work at home ensure it’s in a separate location from where you take your leisure.

Spend time outdoors. Leave your devices behind and go for a walk, or a run, or a bike ride. Enjoy nature. Research has shown that being in nature helps restore your neuronal circuits. Take the time to recharge your batteries, reflect and contemplate.

NOTES:
SUGGESTED READING LIST


