

The Power of Concentration

When I was a child, I saw how a magnifying glass could burn a piece of paper, when the rays of the sun were focused through it. The fire could start only when the sun's rays were concentrated to a small point. When the magnifying glass was moved too far away or too close to the paper, the rays were not focused enough and nothing happened. This experience describes vividly the power of concentration. This power can be described as focused attention. It is the ability to direct the attention to one single thought or subject, to the exclusion of everything else.

When our mind is focused, our energies are not dissipated on irrelevant activities or thoughts. This is why developing concentration is essential to anyone who aspires to take charge of his or her life. This skill is essential for every kind of success. Without it, our efforts get scattered, but with it, we can accomplish great things.

Concentration has many uses and benefits. It assists in studying and understanding faster, improves the memory, and helps in focusing on any task, job, activity or goal, and achieving it more easily and efficiently. It is also required for developing psychic powers, and is a powerful tool for the efficient use of creative visualization.

When this ability is developed, the mind obeys us more readily and does not engage in futile, negative thoughts or worries. We gain mental mastery and we experience true peace of mind.

This ability also plays an important role in meditation. Without it, the mind just jumps restlessly from one thought to another, not allowing us to meditate properly.

Do you now realize, why it is very important and worthwhile to develop and improve the ability to concentrate?

To develop this power you need to train and exercise it. Forget all your excuses about not having the time or being too busy. Do not say that the circumstances are not appropriate or that you cannot find a quiet place to exercise. With a little planning, desire and motivation you can always find the time to exercise each day, no matter how busy you are.

The Restless Mind

Thoughts claim our attention incessantly, and waste our time and energy on unimportant and useless matters. They actually rule our life. We have become so used to this slavery, that we take it for granted, and have become unconscious of this habit, except on certain occasions.

While breathing, we do not need to pay attention to each inhalation and exhalation. We become conscious of the process of breathing, only when we have some difficulty with breathing, such as when our nose is clogged, due to a cold, or when we are in an unventilated room.

It is the same with thinking. We become conscious of the constant onslaught of our thoughts, and of our inability to calm them down, only when we need to concentrate, solve a problem or study. We are also acutely aware of them when we have worries or fears.

Look at the following familiar situation. You need to study something for your job or for an exam. You sit comfortably on the sofa with the book in your hands and start reading. After a while you feel hungry and go to the kitchen to eat something.

You return to read, and then hear you people talking outside. You listen to them for several moments and then bring your attention back to the book.

After a while you feel restless and switch on the radio to listen to some music. You continue to read for a little while, and then remember something that happened yesterday, and you start thinking about it.

When you look at your watch, you are amazed to find out that one complete hour has passed and you have hardly read anything.

This is what happens when one lacks concentration. Imagine what you could have accomplished, if you could control your attention and focus your mind!

Work that requires physical strength, such as carrying heavy loads for example, develops physical strength. Yet, it is not as exercising daily to the gym in a systematic manner. It is the same with concentration. Reading, studying and trying to pay attention to what we do, develop some of this ability, but practicing exercises diligently each day is something else, it is like training in a gym.

Inner resistance to developing concentration

In order to develop this ability we have to train our minds. Most people think that concentration is a strenuous and tiring activity, and that it involves exertion and tension, which are difficult and unpleasant.

This belief starts at an early age. Parents and teachers expect children to study, do their homework and get good grades. This brings up in the children a feeling of being coerced and forced to do something they don't like doing. When they are too often told that they are not concentrating good enough, they develop a loathing for concentration, and often for studying too. These become associated with coercion, lack of freedom, doing something they do not like to do, and which is against their will. When they grow up, it is no wonder that their powers of concentration are weak, and they have no desire to strain their minds.

Though most people acknowledge the fact that good concentration is a great asset, yet most of them do nothing to strengthen it, mostly because they don't know how. Reading and thinking about its benefits, and about the reasons why it should be cultivated, can help to change the attitude toward it.

Concentration can be fun if approached in the right way. It should be practiced with joy, fun, optimism, and understanding of its great possibilities. It has to be approached in a positive manner and then success dawns.

The benefits of developing concentration

Sometimes you can find strong powers of concentration in yourself. When you really and earnestly want to excel in your studies, pass an important exam or solve a problem, this power becomes available to you. In such cases, it appears because of some need or desire, but developing it in a systematic way brings it under your control, and grants you the ability to use it intentionally, whenever you need it. To do so, you need to practice special exercises on a daily basis.



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Here is what you can gain by developing this power:

- Control of your thoughts.
- The ability to focus your mind.
- Peace of mind.
- Freedom from futile and annoying thoughts.
- The ability to choose your thoughts.
- Better memory.
- Self-confidence.
- Inner strength.
- Will power.
- Decisiveness.
- The ability to study and comprehend more quickly.
- Inner happiness.
- Enhanced capability to develop psychic abilities.
- More powerful and efficient use of creative visualization.
- Enhanced ability to meditate.
- And much more...

Seems too good to be true? Develop the power of concentration and find out for yourself!

Concentration Exercises

Sharpening the needle of concentration needs practice as everything else in life. Do you go to the gym? If you do, how many times during the week and for how long? Do you study a foreign language? If you do, then how much time do you devote to it? Developing concentration is not different; training is required. Even ten minutes a day will do you good.

I am now going to give you some simple exercises to perform. Start with ten minutes each day, and in time you may lengthen the time to fifteen minutes. You have to understand that the mind does not like any discipline. It loves its freedom more than anything else, and will try to stand in your way, whenever and however it can. It will cause you to forget to do the exercises, make you feel lazy, and tempt you to postpone the exercises. It will find many tricks to stop and disturb you, but you can and must be stronger.

Always remember that the choice is yours, to be a slave to the mind and its whims, or to be its master. It may be hard to accept the idea that the mind is only some kind of a machine and that you are not the mind. It is an instrument, which has its value if used correctly, but at the present, most people are ruled by this instrument. You are not the mind and its thoughts; they are just some kind of power that you are using. By practicing mental exercises it is possible to train the mind and master it. It should be put in its proper place, as your servant and not as your boss and master.

Most people believe that they are the mind, or that the mind is a part of them, and they erroneously believe that controlling the mind means holding themselves back and denying their freedom. They feel that it is not natural, that it is some sort of repression. These beliefs are wrong. What you are doing is putting the mind in its proper place. It is a power that is ruling your life, not always to your own good. The time has come for you to reclaim your birthright as a master of the mind.

The proof that we are not the mind comes with training. Accept it in theory and in time, as your control over your thoughts grows, you will see it as a fact. Remember, you are not the mind, and this is the reason that it is possible to control it. We are controlling some kind of power, not ourselves. Choose to be free. Real freedom is freedom from the obsession of thoughts. Why be a slave to the mind? Why obey its every whim? Why let it rule your life and make you say and do things you do not want to? Be free and strong, it is possible and it is worthwhile.

Preliminaries Before The Concentration Exercises

When starting to learn to concentrate you have to find a place where you can be alone and undisturbed. You can sit crossed legged on the floor if you can, or on a chair. Sit with spine erect. Take a few calm deep breaths and then relax your body. In your mind go through each muscle and part of the body and relax it.

I will now give you some exercises to practice. Start with the first exercise, and practice it daily, until you are able to do it easily and without thinking about anything else for at least five "clean" minutes. You have to be honest with yourself, and proceed to the next one only after you are convinced that the exercise is practiced with full concentration.

No timetable can be given, as this may be frustrating. If for example I tell you that an exercise has to be completed in a week, two things may happen. You may get disappointed if you cannot get the desired concentration within a week, or you may move on without practicing the exercise correctly. Practicing an exercise successfully is an individual matter. It may take days, weeks and sometimes even months.

Put your whole attention into the exercises. Do not think about anything else. Be careful not to fall asleep, daydream or think about other matters. The moment you find yourself thinking about something else, stop the exercise and start again. When you become proficient, lengthen the time, and if possible, include another session in the afternoon. Do not attempt too much at the start. You may think the exercises are too simple and easy and try to perform them all at once. Go slowly, do not overdo or tense your brain. Try to reach perfection.

If you find it too difficult, or thoughts distract you and make you think about other matters, don't despair. Everyone encounters difficulties along the way. The successful ones are those who go on and never give up. If you persist in spite of difficulties and disturbances, success will crown your efforts. Remember, even those with powerful concentration had to exercise.

It does not matter if your concentration is weak, it can be strengthened. You need not be some special person to be able to do that. But each will reach a different level of concentration. Some will have a stronger power, others not so strong. It all depends on how much time, energy and earnestness you put into the project. I repeat what I wrote earlier, even ten minutes a day will add to your power.

In time you will find out that you can concentrate anywhere, anytime, no matter what your circumstances are. Do you understand what does it mean? To be able to concentrate, think and function under the most trying circumstances, staying calm, relaxed and collected. The reward is worth the effort a thousand fold.

Now to the exercises. Some of them may be familiar to you. Some may seem too easy to perform. Some were taken from various sources and some created by me. When your concentration and knowledge about concentration increases you will be able to create new exercises by yourself.

For full benefit, it is advisable that you practice each exercise for one additional week, after you are convinced that you are practicing it correctly and with full attention.

Concentration exercises

Exercise 1

Take a book and count the words in any one paragraph. Count them again to be sure that you have counted them correctly. Start with one paragraph and when it becomes easier, count the words in a whole page. Perform the counting mentally and only with your eyes, without pointing your finger at each word.

Exercise 2

Count backwards in your mind, from one hundred to one.

Exercise 3

Count in your mind from one hundred to one, skipping each three numbers, that is 100, 97, 94, etc.

Exercise 4

Choose an inspiring word, or just a simple sound, and repeat it silently in your mind for five minutes. When your mind can concentrate more easily, try to reach ten minutes of uninterrupted concentration.

Exercise 5

Take a fruit, an apple for example, and look at it from all sides. Concentrate your attention on it and examine it from all sides. Devote the whole session to concentrating on it. Do not be carried away by irrelevant thoughts that arise. Stay with the apple. It could be any other fruit. Look at it and do not think about the shop where you bought it, about the way it is grown, its nutritive value etc, only about the object in front of you. Just look at it, see it, smell it and touch it.

Exercise 6

This is the same as exercise number 5, only that this time you visualize the fruit with your eyes closed. Start by performing again exercise number 5 for five minutes, and then do this one. Try to see, feel, taste, smell the fruit in your imagination. Try to see a clear and well defined image. If difficulties arise open your eyes, look at the fruit, close them again and continue the exercise.

Exercise 7

Take a small simple object such as a spoon, a fork, or a glass. Concentrate on one of these objects. Watch the object from all sides without any verbalization, that is, with no words in your mind. Just watch the object without thinking with words about it.

Exercise 8

After becoming proficient in the above exercises, you can come to this exercise. Draw a small geometrical figure, about three inches in size, such as a triangle, a rectangular or a circle, paint it with any color you wish, and concentrate on it. You should see only the figure, nothing else. Only the figure exists for you now, with no unrelated thoughts or any distractions. Try not to think with words during the exercise. Watch the figure in front of you and that's it. Try not to strain your eyes.

Exercise 9

The same as number 8, only this time visualize the figure with the eyes closed. As before, if you forget how the figure looks like, open your eyes for a few seconds and watch the figure and then close your eyes and continue with the exercise.

Exercise 10

The same as above in number 9 but the eyes open.

Exercise 11

Try for at least five minutes, to stay without thoughts. This exercise is to be attempted only after all the previous ones have been performed successfully. The previous exercises, if practiced correctly, will endow you with the ability to impose silence on your thoughts. In time it will become easier and easier.

The secret of success is constant practice.

The more time you devote to the exercises the faster your success arrives. Go on gradually; ten minutes at the start and in time as you gain the ability to concentrate, give it more time. When you see that you are successful, you will begin to love the exercises, and in time they will become a habit. You will be able to concentrate your attention easily and effortlessly upon anything you want to concentrate on.

Are you jogging, exercising at the gym or studying a foreign language? How difficult it was in the start? How many times you wanted to quit? Yet, after a while you started to like what you were doing. It became a habit, needing no effort to perform. So it is with developing the power of concentration.

After some of time you will start to feel differently. It will be easier to concentrate. Your mind will be calm and relaxed and you will radiate peace into your surroundings. Things, circumstances and events that used to agitate and anger you, will not influence your inner calmness. You will experiment happiness, content and satisfaction, self-confidence and inner strength. You will be able to cope more easily and efficiently with the outer world.

You will feel a new form of consciousness growing in you, bringing you peace of mind. It may come every now and then for a brief moment, but in time it will grow and fill you completely. You will be able to make the mind work for you when you need its services, in a most efficient way. You will be able to silence it when its services are not needed.

I assure you, that the attitude to life and the reactions to events change after starting to practice concentration. It is some kind of automatic and gradual process. You come to know many things about the mind and how it functions, and you learn to deal with it efficiently.

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http://www.successconsciousness.com/index_000004.htm