



Concentrate on what you are doing

If you ask most people to explain what concentration is, they will usually give you another word that means the same as concentration like “focus” or “think about it”. The reason for this explanation is that very few people have had the opportunity to learn how to improve their concentration skills so they struggle to explain what it is.



In basic terms, concentration is the control over what information your brain is picking up and processing through the senses and from within the body (sensory information) and what topic your mind is processing (thoughts, images and mental movies). When trying to learn concentration as a skill it is easier to break it down into parts and refer to it as **attentional control**.

The first step in understanding your attentional control is to determine how you pay attention to things that are happening around you when you are doing a task. Working with four basic categories will help you to identify if your attentional control could benefit from some training.

Narrow attention

Means that you are keeping your thoughts directed at a specific object, sensation, piece of information or an action. You are able to block out information that is not relevant to focus on the task.

Broad attention

Means that you are able to take in lots of information from different sources at the same time. You are able to multi-task and move between activities, or take into account lots of external and internal information to make complex decisions.

On any given work day, you will use a mixture of these attention styles and will likely move between them as your tasks change. Sometimes however, you might get stuck using an attention style that is not right for a task. In the coming month think about times when you are not attending to the right information at the right time and in particular, when it causes you to feel stressed, make an error or deliver below average performance. Here are a few examples:

- ▶ You are thinking about a work problem in your head (narrow-internal) when you should be paying attention to the driving task you are currently doing (broad-external).
- ▶ You get so angry with a member of the community on the telephone that you are paying attention to your own thoughts and feelings of anger (narrow-internal) instead of listening to them and working out how to solve their problem (narrow-external).

Internal attention

Means that you are paying attention to signals coming from inside your own body. This could be physical sensations (e.g. pain, thirst, hunger) or mental processes (e.g. replaying thoughts and images, daydreaming).

External attention

Means that you are paying attention to things that are happening to you. It is information coming in from the outside world through one or more of your senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch).

- ▶ You are trying to work on a document that needs to be finished in two hours (narrow-external) but you keep getting distracted by other people, your email and your smartphone (broad-external).
- ▶ You are working outdoors and you need to be aware of everything going on around you to stay safe (broad-external), but you get so focused on your task (narrow-external) that you don't watch where you are walking and you trip over.

World Health Day 2016: Beat Diabetes

The theme this year for World Health Day on 7th April is diabetes.

- ▶ Diabetes is the fastest growing chronic condition in Australia, increasing at a faster rate than other chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer.
- ▶ 280 Australians develop diabetes every day - that's one person every five minutes, and the World Health Organisation have projected the disease will be the 7th leading cause of death by 2030.
- ▶ A large proportion of diabetes cases are preventable. Simple lifestyle measures have been shown to be effective in preventing or delaying the onset of type 2 diabetes. Maintaining normal body weight, engaging in regular physical activity, and eating a healthy diet can reduce the risk of diabetes.
- ▶ Diabetes can be controlled and managed to prevent complications. For all types of diabetes, keeping blood glucose levels in a healthy range will help prevent both short-term and long-term complications.

White fish with salsa verde & quinoa salad

Serves 4

Ingredients:

- ▶ 1 cup quinoa
- ▶ 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ▶ 1 tablespoon canola oil
- ▶ 4 x 150g white fish fillets such as snapper or barramundi (skin on)
- ▶ 1 bunch broccolini, cut into 3–4cm pieces
- ▶ 2 bunches asparagus, cut into 3–4cm lengths
- ▶ Small handful dill, roughly chopped
- ▶ Juice of half a lemon
- ▶ Seeds of half a pomegranate

Salsa verde

- ▶ 5 gherkins
- ▶ 1 tablespoon capers
- ▶ ½ bunch parsley
- ▶ Juice of half a lemon
- ▶ 1 tablespoon olive oil

Method:

1. Place quinoa in a small saucepan, cover with about two cups of hot water and bring to the boil. Reduce heat to a simmer and cook for 15 minutes or until tender. Drain quinoa well and place in a large bowl.
2. To make the salsa verde, chop all ingredients finely with a knife and stir together.
3. Heat a heavy-based pan over medium-high heat. Add the canola oil then place fillets into the pan, skin side down. Hold fillets down with an egg slide for the first 20 seconds of cooking to ensure even, crisp skin. Cook for 3–4 minutes, turn over and turn heat down to medium. Cook for a further 3–4 minutes or until just cooked through.
4. Remove fish from pan and set aside. Add broccolini and asparagus to the same pan and cook until just tender but still bright green.
5. Stir into quinoa with most of the dill (keep a little for serving) and the juice of half a lemon. Divide quinoa salad between serving plates. Top with fish, reserved dill, pomegranate seeds and salsa verde.



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