



CONCENTRATION ENHANCEMENT & DECREASING DISTRACTION WHILE STUDYING

When you're studying, distracting thoughts will slow you down (e.g., less efficient / study longer). Even worse, you are practicing distracted thinking while you study. What you practice-- you perform. Research indicates that when people are stressed (like at the time of a test), it is more challenging to think critically. Stressed individuals typically resort to automatic thinking (or thinking that has been practiced repeatedly). If you are studying in a distracted state, you are practicing distraction and this may manifest on the exam.

To enhance your concentration and decrease distraction while studying:

1. As you read or review the study material, attend actively to your "running dialogue." Your running dialogue is your thoughts, attitudes, or feelings about what you are reviewing or may be distracting thoughts.
2. Examples of distracting thinking include:
 - a. Reading the same paragraph or page 3 times and you still cannot recall what you've read.
 - b. Thinking about another assignment, test, or project while you are studying.
 - c. Thinking about non-academic related activities (e.g., what's for lunch? I wonder what so-and-so is doing now? etc.)
 - d. Thinking about what you reviewed 10 minutes ago or what you are going to review 10 minutes from now.
3. Remind yourself that all of the things that intrude in your thinking (i.e., distracters) are likely important, just not at this time.
4. Write out distracting thoughts on paper as they come to you.
5. Say to yourself, "These things are important, just not at this time."
6. Re-direct your focus to your study material.
7. During each study break, allow yourself to actively worry about what you have written down as a distraction.
 - a. Intentional worrying tends to be more productive than intrusive worry.
 - b. The distracters likely have some significance if they called your attention away from the material.
8. Remind yourself: You are preparing not only by learning the content, but also by training the state of mind you hope to have when you take the exam (i.e., high concentration / low distractibility). If you practice this enhanced concentration, this state of mind will most likely occur automatically at the time of the exam.

