



Hyperfocus: How to Be More Productive in a World of Distraction

Chris Bailey

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Canada's productivity expert returns with a totally fresh angle on how to do more with less.

Throughout his experiments and research, Chris Bailey came across many little-known insights into how we focus (a key element of productivity), including the surprising idea that focus isn't so much a state of heightened awareness (as we'd assume), but a balance between two frames of mind. The most recent neuroscientific research on attention reveals that our brain has two powerful modes that can be unlocked when we use our attention well: a focused mode (hyperfocus), which is the foundation for being highly productive, and a creative mode (scatterfocus), which enables us to connect ideas in novel ways. *Hyperfocus* helps readers unlock both, so they can concentrate more deeply, think more clearly, and work and live more deliberately. Diving deep into the science and theories about how and why we bring our attention to bear on life's big goals and everyday tasks, Chris Bailey takes his unique approach to productivity to the next level in *Hyperfocus*, while retaining the approachable voice and perspective that made him a fast favourite.

Hyperfocus: How to Be More Productive in a World of Distraction Details

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From Reader Review Hyperfocus: How to Be More Productive in a World of Distraction for online ebook

Daniel Rodic says

This book introduces two important concepts of “Hyperfocus” (focusing on one thing with no distractions) and “Scatterfocus” (deliberately letting your mind roam free)

Focus matters because in today's world the competition for your attention is fierce.

Focus allows you to utilize your most valuable currency — your attention — in the ways you see fit, oppose to letting external forces dictate where you spend it.

Simple tactics to focus better include:

- * Put your phone (and anything else) that could compete for your attention out of reach or in a different room
- * Choose an environment where there are few things that could be competing with your attention (this is why planes and trains are often easier to work on as the alternatives you have are much less stimulating)
- * Make a distraction list every time something comes up that shifts your focus away from your desired task
- * Question if where you are about to spend your attention is the right place. Just because something “pitches” for your attention, doesn't mean you need to consume it. You are what you pay attention to.
- * Coffee helps! It provides a focus boost.
- * [For reading] Grab a pen or highlighter and actually write in the book that you're reading to actively consume the information
- * Notice when your focus wavers. If it does, take a break doing a mindless task to recharge your attention.

There are four types of tasks:

- * Necessary work - unattractive yet productive (we only do these when we have a deadline - e.g. filing expenses)
- * Unnecessary work - unattractive and unproductive (typically we use these tasks to procrastinate)
- * Distracting work - attractive and unproductive tasks (e.g. netflix, Instagram)
- * Purposeful work - attractive and productive (these are the things you were put on the earth to do, they come to you much easier than to others)

Most information is organized in units no greater than 7 as anything more than that we find trouble storing in our brains

When we store more than 7, it ends up being broken into smaller groupings

Memorizing a credit card number is memorizing 4 segments of 4 numbers for example

Our attention space holds everything that you're aware of in this current moment

If you are truly focused on, reading a book for example, you would have no capacity for anything else in your attention space

Mindfulness is noticing what your mind is full of.

“All thoughts want to be taken seriously but few warrant it.”

Simply noticing what is occupying our attentional space has been shown to make us more productive.

Habits require very little attentional space to perform. So you often can pair multiple habits together, or one habit with a simple task, but rarely can you pair a habit with a complex task - that task requires all the attention space you have to offer and you must do it solo.

Productivity is doing the right thing in each moment.

On average we work no more than 40 seconds before being distracted.

WHAT IS HYPERFOCUS?

One task that fills your entire attention space.

This is a task that's probably at a comfortable level of difficulty (Atomic Habits says the optimal level is +4% the difficulty level that is within your current skill set)

It's hard but not impossible.

It makes us completely immersed in our work and happier as a result of that.

HOW TO ENTER HYPERFOCUS?

1. Choose a meaningful object of attention
2. Eliminate as many external and internal distractions as you can
3. Focus on that chosen object of attention
4. Continue to bring your attention back to that object of attention

#1 - setting the intention, is the most important thing to start with

#3 - set a defined period of time that is reasonable so you have a clear start and end

#4 - draw your attention when your mind wanders

Other tactics

- * Everyday pick three things to focus on
- * Order items which are most consequential and do them first. Consider not only immediate consequences but second and third order consequences
- * Set an hourly awareness chime and when it goes off ask yourself
- * Was your mind wandering when the chime went off?
- * Are you working on autopilot or something you intended to focus on
- * Are you immersed in a productive task? If so how long have you been focusing on it?
- * What is the most consequential thing you could be working on right now? Are you working on it?
- * How full is your attentional space? Is it overflowing or do you have attention to spare?
- * Are there distractions preventing you from hyper focusing on your work?

When setting an intention ensure it has when and where you'll do it.

“Go to the gym” becomes “Schedule and go to the gym on my lunch break”

TACTICS ON HOW TO HYPERFOCUS?

- * How long do you want to hyper focus for? Pick a time frame that's easy (e.g. 15 minutes)
- * Anticipate what may distract you and block time to hyper focus
- * Set a timer for your start and end time

The tasks that you're least excited to do are the ones that typically require the most hyperfocus on

WHAT IS SCATTERFOCUS?

Its your brains most creative mode. You activate it by deliberately letting your mind wander.

It helps you become more self-aware, process ideas and reflect on the meaning of your experiences

There are three styles of scatterfocus

1. Capture mode: Letting your mind roam freely and capturing whatever comes up
2. Problem-crunching mode: Holding a problem loosely in mind and letting your thoughts wander around it
3. Habitual mode: engaging in a simple task and capturing the ideas that arise (this is the most powerful mode)

Capture Mode = Sit with a blank notebook and see what comes up and write it down

Problem-Crunching mode = Hold a problem in your mind, when your mind wanders notice the distraction and pull your thoughts back to solving the problem

Habitual Mode = This is the most fun, and therefore expands your attentional space

Positive thinking doesn't make you more happy - research shows its counter productive

Positive thinking lets us feel successful in the moment but at the price of not actually making a plan to be successful later

Focus on the system, not the end result.

Fabricio Rigotto says

Very good reading on a tired subject

I am an executive with more than 20 years of experience. I often find this kind of book inaccurate or simply boring. This one is neither! I am enjoying increased productivity and meaningful life just by implementing a few tips. Read this!!!

David Hutchinson says

This is the second audio book I've listened to from Chris. I thought the content might just be more of the same from the Productivity Project but was pleasantly surprised that this was not the case - instead it compliments the information from that book really well. You don't need to read the Productivity Project first to enjoy this book. They both stand on their own and provide great insights and advice on productivity.

Some of the studies he mentions in here is fascinating, particularly the one that illustrates just how much we avoid being alone with our thoughts and seek distractions.

My personal big 3 takeaways from this book that have the biggest impact on my productivity:

1. Be intentional with your actions.

2. Limit distractions, specifically managing those on your phone. One pet peeve I have which he specifically mentions here a few times is when you are out, or carrying a conversation with a friend/family member or co-worker and instead of being in that moment, a lot people focus on and get distracted by their smart phone.

3. Taking breaks is a good thing, you are much more productive if you disconnect and take a refreshing break instead of trying to power through and meet your deadline. This is something I struggle with a lot in my profession particularly during busy periods.

Overall a good listen, also wanted to add that Chris's narration has improved from his first book. Definitely would recommend the audio book edition of this.

Pitchayapa Apithamsontorn says

Simple basic productivity tips that you could find on the internet. Ugh. Glad i bought this in kindle so I dont need to see this book lying around my room to remind me of being stupid enough to buy this book.

Manal Omar says

An overall helpful and eye-opening read. Good insights and interesting experiments and studies. I liked the concepts it presented.

David Manley says

Manage your sources of distraction. Meditate. Be deliberate in how you use your mental energy. Etc. Some good tips in there actually but nothing earth shattering. Maybe I'll report back after I've seen the results.

Hannah says

Some great tips on how to effectively focus, and surprising advice on letting your mind wander. Could've been a bit shorter, but has some great tips and lessons to keep with you.

Mehrsa says

I like to read one of these books every now and again. This one helped me have a few really productive days and if I can remember the insights, hopefully I can have a few more until it's time to read another one of these. The basics are clear: you have to purposefully turn off distractions--emails, notifications of all kinds, social media, etc. You have to sleep and you have to give yourself some time to just make connections in your free time instead of fighting boredom. The book was short and helpful, but mostly it's the same kind of productivity advice.

Dylan Groves says

he describes his process as ordering 10-15 books on a topic and reading a lot of academic articles, and that is exactly how the book comes across.

James Beach says

Can't get over how practical this book is. I had a vague sense of how distracted I am all the time - but Chris made me painfully aware of just how much attention I'm wasting every day. And then outlined exactly how I can better manage my attention. Everyone needs to read this book!

Izzy Myers says

My life will forever be split into "before Hyperfocus" and "after Hyperfocus". And I'm optimistic that the "after Hyperfocus" part will be infinitely more focused and creative than the "before" part was, thanks to this book. I felt like on every page, the author was speaking directly to me. All of the examples were incredibly relatable, and all of the solutions Bailey presented seemed intuitive and something I not only could do, but absolutely needed and wanted to do. I can already feel myself becoming more aware of what I'm dedicating my attention to. And I'm so much less averse to giving my attention a bit of a break (who knew I could go for a walk without music!?! And that I would enjoy it!). Do yourself a favour, and give this book a read. You will not regret it.

Dora says

Bailey did not disappoint me, as I expected. Apart from the many interesting findings and statistics he includes in the book to support his ideas and personal experiments with productivity (kudos on that!), I greatly appreciated the sections that explain the benefits of meditation for increasing focus and the suggestion to divide your work into the intentional-unintentional-purposeful-distracting diagram, which could greatly improve the way we look at tasks and prioritize them. There are, of course, many other gems in the book.

Jason Röhde says

Some good ideas to help get through each day by applying different types of focus at certain times. I love the fact Chris considers drinking as an opportunity to "scatter focus." I'm totally using that as an excuse to have a beer or 3 in the future.

Drink beer to come up with ideas, drink coffee to get them done.

Rebecca says

I thought this was a really good guide to achieving focus and improving concentration. Some of the tips I has recently started doing before I read this book so it was nice to see that I was in agreement with this book. I definitely found some interesting tidbits in there and it's a book I could see myself returning to for advice in the future.

Pat Camalliere says

Heard the author on the radio and the book sounded like something helpful for a household that has two aging people, one who had a recent stroke. I found the book interesting but not life-changing. It seems my habits have developed over the years to have discovered almost all the tactics that are recommended, many of which I do and others I believe I should do. The book was of value to me nonetheless because it validated my habits and routines, and it explained why they work in a way I hadn't taken the time to consider. I would recommend this book to people who want to organize their productivity in accord with their brain's capabilities. I might suspect, however, that many people will fall into two categories: those that are already following most of the advice within, and those who probably won't make the effort. Which is a shame...
