

Single-Minded Focus

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Single-Minded Focus

Have you ever had trouble getting started on something, or struggled to finish what you've started? All of us have at one time experienced confusion about the best way to begin working on a goal or project, or struggled to figure out the correct course of action to take, or felt indecisive about exactly what we were trying to accomplish. Some of us start out strong and focused but gradually lose motivation until we give up completely.

How do you know if you have a problem focusing? If you have dozens of unfinished projects gathering dust; if you consistently berate yourself for not following through, or feel like a failure because you can't seem to accomplish anything definitive – your problem might be lack of focus.

Repeated experiences like these can often result in a lifelong search for the “rights” – the “right opportunity,” the “right career,” the “right business opportunity,” the “right spouse,” or any number of other false solutions. These are false solutions because the problem is not caused by the goals, the spouse, the opportunity or anything outside of yourself.

The true solution lies within you. If you have the ability to FOCUS, you have the ability to become successful at anything you do.

This report is going to walk you through each important step of creating a single-minded focus. By the time you finish reading you should have a clear, concise idea of exactly what you need to do to not only finish what you start – but drastically increase your potential for success with whatever you do.

Why Focus is Crucial

What is focus and what can it do for you? For the purposes of this report, focus can be defined as: centering attention on something (such as a goal or problem).

When you look at the benefits of focus, you can easily see why it affects everything you do:

- Focus helps you get clear about your objectives.
- Focus helps you cut a precise path to your goal(s).
- Focus keeps you on track with your plans.
- Focus helps you avoid distractions.
- Focus helps you work as efficiently as possible.
- Focus helps identify specific, productive action steps.

Clearly, if you want to be successful in less time with less effort, focus is a skill you need to have.

Stepping Back: Seeing the Big Picture

You may initially think of focus as the ability to narrow your attention to a very specific point, and you would be accurate with that assessment.

However, before you narrow your perspective you might find it beneficial to widen your focus - before you begin setting goals and plotting a course to reach them.

This is important because we are often short-sighted and emotionally involved when it comes to our own dreams, goals and aspirations. It's very easy to get blinded by inspiration and miss important information that would help us achieve our goal quickly and easily. If we're standing too close to our objective, we can't see the forest for the trees, so to speak.

Stepping back and looking dispassionately at the big picture can help us gain a clearer idea of what we want and the best way to get it. Start by asking yourself these questions:

- What do you want to accomplish?
- Why do you want to accomplish it?
- What will such a goal do for you, and for others?
- Is it challenging enough to be worth the effort?
- Is it grounded enough to be achievable?
- What possible obstacles might you encounter as you pursue this goal?

- What types of challenges might threaten your focus, and what can you do about them?
- What steps can you take to ensure your determination stays strong?

Considering these scenarios beforehand can alert you to potential problems, and prepare you to handle the challenges you'll face.

Narrowing In: One Thing at a Time

Once you've gotten a clear idea of the big picture and assessed the challenges and possibilities, it's time to narrow your focus. And when I say "narrow" – I mean really NARROW.

Any goal you have in mind will be comprised of dozens (or even hundreds) of smaller steps that must be completed first. In order to reach the big goal at the end, you need to start at the very beginning.

Probable first steps might include:

- Research and expand your knowledge.
- Form a clear, detailed plan of action.
- Identify small, achievable action steps you can take now.
- Create a plan to gradually increase the effort you exert.

- Use your smaller victories to boost your confidence and encourage bolder actions.

The exact steps will vary widely depending upon your specific goal, of course. The point is to look at the culmination of your goal and identify each specific step that will lead you there.

Once you have identified these smaller goals, you need to remove your attention from the larger goal temporarily so you can focus effectively on the smaller steps. Refusing to do so is kind of like trying to drive a long distance by focusing only on the destination - it just won't work. In order to reach your destination safely and in the least amount of time, you need to focus on the **route** that leads there, mile by mile.

Your goals are no different! Too many people try to tackle their entire goal in one fell swoop, quickly become exhausted or intimidated, and give up. They figure they must not have what it takes, so they quit. The truth is, almost NO ONE has the level of focus needed to make huge, drastic changes like that. Most successful people have wisely learned to focus on one step at a time, and you can too. Narrow your focus to include ONLY the smaller steps and they will lead you easily to the larger goal.

Commitment to the Process

Also necessary from you is a commitment to the process. Let me say that again with emphasis in the proper place: Also necessary from you is a commitment to the **PROCESS**.

Not only is the fulfillment of goals a process, but so also is your ability to develop a strong focus. Don't fool yourself into believing that you can magically and suddenly become keenly focused when you've struggled to do so in the past. The tips and techniques in this report should help you immeasurably, but you will still need to follow a progression of growth, **GRADUALLY** increasing your ability to focus. Keeping in mind that this is a process at all times will help you avoid the trap of perfectionism - and the frustration that accompanies it.

Here is how to make the process simple and enjoyable:

- Lower your expectations and focus on creating small but measurable changes – at least to begin with. Small because they are within your current ability, and measurable because you will be able to see the changes happening within you (and the results showing in your actions) which will inspire you to keep going.

- Stay focused on the positive. If you start focusing on your lack of progress (or slow progress), or the obstacles you face day to day, you will lose steam more quickly than you would have believed possible. Perspective is everything! Just by paying more attention to the benefits and gains and less attention to the struggles and difficulties, you will make it much easier on yourself.
- Keep striving for better and better focus. It may seem hard to believe, but eventually your focusing ability will begin to take on a life of its own. You'll find yourself effortlessly being more productive and more prolific than you've ever been before. But in order to reach that point, you have to begin by pushing yourself little by little, building on the skills you have.

Commit to sticking with the process even before you begin to see changes, even if it doesn't seem to be working, even if it seems too far out of your comfort zones.

If it helps you, maybe post some transformational images in a place where you'll see them every day. Some ideas: a butterfly emerging from a cocoon, a flower blooming, etc. These will serve as powerful reminders that you also are going through a personal transformation, and there will be a payoff at the end.

Enthusiasm: The “Oomph Factor”

Enthusiasm is probably one of the most beneficial attitudes that can aid your focus. It provides that necessary “oomph” – vigor, sparkle, verve, zest, or excitement that accompanies any great accomplishment.

Without enthusiasm, you might not find the journey interesting enough to continue.

When you first set a goal, enthusiasm flows naturally and easily. You’re fired up by excitement and ready to move forward at breakneck speed. If only enthusiasm could STAY high after the initial start. For most of us, it doesn’t.

However, it is possible to manufacture a genuine sense of enthusiasm, and there are a few ways you can do this:

- Re-commit to your goals on a regular basis. Mentally go over the reasons you set your goals in the first place. Remember how you felt when you first conceived the idea and the excitement you felt when you decided to go for it. Re-commit to that ideal again. Don’t let the fire burn out; simply keep adding fuel and building it higher and higher as the days and weeks wear on.

- Pump yourself up. Give yourself a lot of positive talk whenever you can. Every day, look yourself in the mirror and give yourself a good old pep talk. Compliment yourself, encourage yourself, inspire yourself and motivate yourself. Affirm that you are capable of anything you want to accomplish, and you are dedicated to making your dreams come true.
- Get excited about your progress in learning to focus! Really congratulate and praise yourself when you stick to your plan. If you just spent 30 minutes focusing on one task and making good progress, it's time for a celebration! It might seem silly to make such a big deal out of it, but I guarantee you'll be grinning from ear to ear and feeling like you just won a grand prize.

Enthusiasm is one of my secret weapons. I have a lot of tools and techniques I use to achieve bigger and bigger goals, but one of the most vital is enthusiasm. Why?

Have you ever heard the phrase, "Attitude is everything"? It really is. If you have the right attitude, nothing will ever seem hopeless or a waste of time. Nothing will seem too difficult or pointless. With the right attitude, you can bounce back from the toughest fall, and get right back on the horse again.

If you take the power of an enthusiastic attitude into your journey to developing a single-minded focus, you will have the perfect “oomph factor” that will help you stay on track, make steady progress, and make all your dreams a reality.

Keeping Your Priorities Straight

We all have priorities, things that demand a measure of our attention. We've got families, jobs, friends, errands to run, personal interests to pursue, households to run, and much more. They are all important to us, but what really determines the importance of something is how devoted we are to MAKING time for it.

All the focus in the world won't help if you don't care enough to make your goal(s) a priority. Likewise, you have to make building a strong focus one of your top priorities.

Focus (getting AND staying focused) takes tremendous discipline. You've got to be strong enough to stick to a plan, and expand that plan as you go. You've got to be dedicated enough to avoid temptations, distractions, and negative thoughts. You've got to be willing to say no to excessive obligations, or figure out a way to rearrange your plans if the unexpected happens.

More than anything, you've got to decide that staying focused on your goals is of vital importance. Otherwise, you'll keep letting fear and distractions derail your efforts.

The simplest way to keep your focus a priority is to set a schedule and stick to it. This is often easier said than done, but you know the old saying that nothing worthwhile comes easy.

One word of warning: don't try to take on too much. It's great to be firm in setting priorities, but one major obstacle people create for themselves is setting an excessively rigid schedule that leaves no room for flexibility, and then they end up feeling stressed and depressed when they can't stick to it. Very few people can stick to an ironclad schedule, except maybe a hermit that has no outside distractions.

Instead, give yourself some leeway (but not TOO much leeway). Try setting a goal to spend 30 minutes a day staying focused on your goals (or whatever you are working on at the time). Then if you feel motivated to continue beyond the 30 minutes, you can.

In fact this is another of my "secret weapons". I've learned something important about myself over the years, and you may find that the same thing applies to you. Here it is:

I will procrastinate and avoid working on a project if it seems to be too difficult, time consuming, complex, or intimidating.

Interestingly, if I trick myself into believing that I'm only going to work on it for 30 minutes or so, I ALWAYS feel motivated to continue beyond the initial 30 minutes and accomplish much more than I planned. It's my own perception that something will take a lot of time or be extremely difficult that gives me pause.

Give this idea some thought and you might discover that you do the same thing, and we are not alone in that habit. The start is the hardest part for many people, so beginning with a very small commitment is a good way to get over that hump. Then you can gradually push yourself to put in longer periods of time.

The important thing is to simply get moving on a regular basis. You'd be amazed at what you can accomplish in even small bursts of activity.

Now for the big question: how do you juggle your priorities?

Sometimes it can seem like there simply aren't enough hours in the day to accomplish everything we want to do. I won't kid you; you will need to be creative about making your focus a priority. Beyond simply "making time" to work on your goals, you will need to make some crucial decisions on a moment-to-moment basis.

You might be tempted by a great television program, an invitation to go out with friends, a spouse that demands some quality time, and more. You will NOT need to neglect the other areas of your life to keep a strong focus. In fact, doing so is usually a very bad idea.

Instead, think about the non-essential activities you do on a daily or weekly basis, and decide which of them can be lessened or eliminated to allow more time for staying focused on your goals. We all have non-essential activities, whether it's 10 hours of television-watching, aimlessly surfing the Internet after dinner, or golfing on Saturday afternoons.

While it's not healthy to eliminate ALL of your hobbies and recreational activities, you can certainly learn to balance them with your other priorities.

I won't launch into a big explanation on this because you are smart enough to know that if you waste a lot of time on unimportant things and don't allot enough time to work on your goals, your progress will be less than impressive. It's just common sense.

If you want to make your objectives a priority, you've got to set aside time to focus intently on them, period.

Motivation From Within

You may think that enthusiasm and motivation go hand in hand, but that's not necessarily true. You can be incredibly enthusiastic about your goals, but not sufficiently motivated to take action so it does you little good.

One good way to get motivated is by observing others that are successful in life. Seeing or reading about people overcoming challenges can give you the urge to push forward yourself, and that's a great way to pump up your motivation. However, external motivation is temporary in nature – especially when you encounter an intimidating obstacle - leaving you constantly seeking more and more inspiration from others.

If you instead focus on generating your OWN inner motivation, you will tap into a bottomless ocean of energy that can power whatever you do.

Here are a few ways to create a continuous current of motivation:

- Make the journey the reward. One major reason we lose motivation is because the prize at the end of the road seems so far away. If I told you that you were going to inherit a million dollars ten years from now, you'd probably say, "Wow, great – but why

ten years?! Can't I have it now?" Knowing that ten long years stand between you and a feeling of satisfaction is unpleasant, to say the least. We like **instant gratification**; screw waiting months or years for the payoff! You can overcome this mind-set by making it your mission to accomplish things simply for the sake of accomplishing them. Let each step of the journey be a reward all its own. Allow yourself to feel really good about the progress you're making, and enjoy each phase of the process.

- Push yourself beyond any perceived limitations. Make it your mission to blast self-limitations out of your reality. As soon as you encounter something you believe you "can't" do, it's time to roll up your sleeves and prove that belief wrong! Let your **adrenaline flow** and your **determination grow**. Focus on becoming the most powerful YOU possible. With the resulting high from such amazing feats, you'll be saying, "Payoff? What payoff?"
- Look for the payoff in every activity. Even though reaching the big goal at the finish line will be a great feeling, you can also choose to FIND a payoff in everything you do along the journey to get there. Let's face it, if something feels like a waste of time, you will find reasons not to do it. It's amazing how easily we can trick ourselves into a sense of futility – even though logically we know

it's not true. But remember, perspective can make the difference! Even if you feel that something is a waste of time (but know it isn't) find the payoff. Identify what you'll GAIN from it, and stay focused on that. Your motivation will skyrocket.

When it comes right down to it, no one else can motivate or de-motivate you. It is ALL dependent upon your own attitude, and your own determination to keep going. When everything is said and done, the bottom line is this: if your goal is THAT important to you, you will keep at it no matter what obstacles appear in your path. Only you can create the incentive to forge ahead, or the excuses to slack off. Sink or swim; succeed or fail miserably – it's up to you.

The Power of Consistency

Consistency is absolutely vital to your focus. Have you ever tried eating once a week? Or showering once a month? Or working out for an entire day only once a month? Obviously, problems would arise if you did these things sporadically.

The same applies to everything you do. You may scoff at this idea and say it doesn't matter if you work on your goals for 10 hours once a week, or 2 hours a day for 5 days a week. I'm going to demonstrate why it DOES matter.

Every action is a form of energy that you are directing toward a specific end result. And the greatest thing about energy is that it is **accumulative** in nature.

The average person probably brushes their teeth for 2 or 3 minutes twice a day. Let's round it up to 5 minutes for the sake of demonstration. So, 5 minutes twice a day equals 10 minutes of daily tooth brushing, or 70 minutes in a 7 day period. (Bet you didn't know brushing your teeth was so time-consuming, huh?) If you instead decided to brush your teeth for 70 minutes today and skip the other 6 days of the week, would the end result be the same? No, because during the other 6 days bacteria

and plaque would be building up on your teeth, promoting decay and gum disease. Yuck.

Let's use another example: the sun. The sun shines for approximately 15 hours in a 24 hour period (depending on the season and geographical location; sometimes less, sometimes slightly more). There are 168 hours in a 7 day period, 105 of them daylight hours (using the 15 hour example). That means we've got approximately 63 hours of darkness in a 7 day period.

Imagine if the sun shone for 105 hours straight, followed by 63 hours of darkness. That would be 4.38 days of sunlight, followed by 2.63 days of solid darkness (a "day" being a 24 hour cycle). How would the plants and trees fare with such a schedule? How would that affect our environment on all levels?

What does this have to do with your focus? Consistency is what creates the most benefits – in anything. Everything you do begins to ACCUMULATE. The more consistent effort and attention you give something, the faster and bigger it grows. This works on a creation level (starting and growing something – like goals) and it also works on a maintenance level (like personal development, fitness and hygiene).

If you devote a large chunk of time to something and then slack off for 5 or 6 times the equivalent of the effort you exerted, you are basically starting over each time you begin again. That's because any benefits you created with your initial effort have begun to stagnate and dwindle away.

Consistency, on the other hand, keeps adding power to what you've already accomplished. You create a solid foundation and then keep building on it.

Make a commitment to focus on your objectives DAILY. Unless a dire emergency arises, you know that you are working on your goal every single day – no excuses allowed! That might sound overwhelming to you, but here's the great thing about consistency: it doesn't require an excessive amount of time. Fifteen minutes, 30 minutes, 60 minutes – however much you can afford – but make sure you stick to it.

I'll be honest, if you're not used to being consistent, it will seem really hard at first. It will feel like a chore and you'll have to push yourself to do it every day. There will be days when you simply don't feel like it. You'll start rationalizing the reasons why it won't hurt to skip a day, one day will turn into two, then ten, then twenty - and before long you'll find

yourself fumbling around in the dark with plaque-coated teeth. It's not pleasant, trust me.

Be firm with yourself; demand consistency from yourself no matter what, and in no time at all you'll grow to love the feeling of accomplishment that results from taking charge of your life.

Mindfulness: The Power of Now

The practice of mindfulness is quite possibly one of the most important parts of developing a strong focus. "Mindfulness" is a common practice in Zen Buddhist traditions, but it can also be applied to your everyday activities to drastically improve your focus.

Mindfulness is all about giving your full awareness and attention to the present moment. You may think you do that anyway, but most of us struggle with wandering-thought syndrome. We pay only partial attention to the task we're working on because other parts of our minds are also trying to remember the name of that girl from high school, making a mental list of groceries to buy on the way home from work, reminding ourselves to pick up the dry cleaning, moaning about how bored we are with what we're currently doing, looking forward to our date on Saturday night, and so on. Much of this happens without our

conscious awareness, but we do have more control over it than we often think.

In order to develop a single-minded focus, you need to gain greater control over your thoughts, and the consistent practice of mindfulness can help you do this.

The simplest way to start is by first making an effort to become more aware and “awake” during the course of your day. Rather than going through the entire day on autopilot, pause every so often and awaken to where you are and what you’re doing right now. You can even recite it mentally to yourself, “I am sitting at my desk, typing on the computer keyboard. I am awake and aware of my existence as a living being.” Tune in to yourself and your place in the world. Really take a moment to SEE the people and places around you. This activity alone will begin to awaken you in dramatic ways if you are consistent with it.

Then start applying the practice of mindfulness to every activity you engage in. When you’re driving your car, turn off the stereo and focus on driving and observing the people, places and things you pass by along the way to your destination. If you take a walk after dinner, ground yourself in the awareness of putting one foot in front of the other,

working your muscles, expanding your lungs, and connecting with the world around you.

When working on your plans or goals, IMMERSE yourself in them. Firmly set aside unrelated thoughts, worries or ideas. If your attention begins to wander, gently but firmly bring it back to the task at hand again.

Be patient with yourself at the beginning because mastering this technique does take a fair amount of practice. In fact, once you start paying attention to your thoughts, you may be horrified at how scattered and unruly they are. It's completely normal, I assure you. Most of us have had no training or practice in controlling our thoughts, so of course they act like unsupervised children. Just keep working at it, and you'll begin to see progress fairly quickly.

Even better, the more you practice mindfulness the stronger your ability to focus will become, which will aid you in achieving a consistent state of mindfulness in your everyday life too! It creates a continuous cycle of increasing focus that will benefit you in whatever you do.

Tenacity: Refusing to Quit

By now you've probably got a solid idea about how to develop a single-minded focus and apply it to any goal, plan or idea. Only one thing more is needed to hold it all together: tenacity.

I won't lie to you; building a strong focus is hard work. It will probably be your biggest challenge yet. But if you keep working at it until you conquer errant thoughts and destroy bad habits, it is a skill that will continue to serve you for the rest of your life.

Regardless of any challenges, **YOU CANNOT QUIT**. No matter how difficult it seems to keep going, you **MUST** be willing to persevere if you want to make it. Remember this: quitting means certain death for your goals; quitting means defeat, disappointment and despondency.

Don't kid yourself into believing that you can quit "for a little while," or "until it gets easier," or "until I feel stronger." If you do this, you will effectively be starting from scratch again. If you can accept that, then go for it. But if your dreams and goals are vitally important to you, and you are absolutely determined to hone your focus until it is razor sharp – you can't stop.

Make a commitment to yourself that you will keep going, no matter what. Even if you believe you only have the strength to devote a few

minutes each day to sharpening your focus and making progress on your goals, **STICK** to those few minutes like glue. Just don't stop.

Draw up a contract with yourself that details this agreement. Sign it. Stick copies of it all over the walls, on the bathroom mirror, in your journal, in your wallet – wherever you'll see it most often.

Tenacity also refers to your self-assurance, did you know that? One definition of tenacity is “not easily pulled apart.” Pull yourself together and stay pulled-together – mentally, emotionally, spiritually and physically. Believe in yourself and your ability to succeed at whatever you do. Build a strong focus and **KEEP** a strong focus. Apply it well and apply it often.

If you can do this consistently, then the success you seek will surely be yours.

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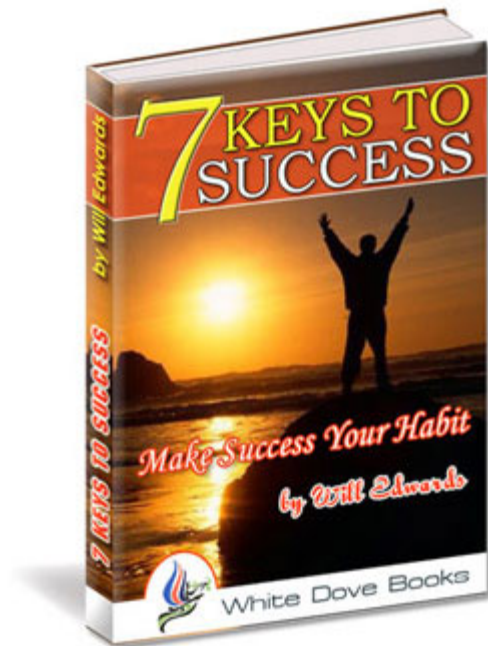
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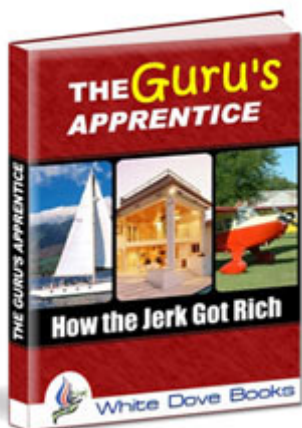
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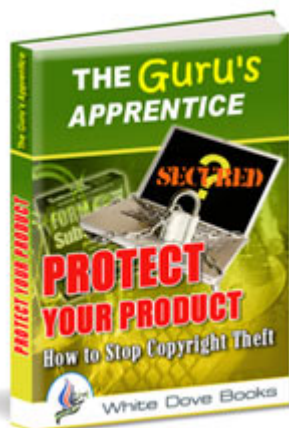
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Will Edwards is the founder of [White Dove Books](#) - the internet's leading website for Self Improvement and Personal Development. A graduate of the University of Birmingham, he develops and teaches Personal

Development workshops and is a published author.

Within its first three years, White Dove Books was recognised as one of the internet's leading sites for self help and personal development; breaking into the top 100,000 sites on the internet at the end of 2005.

The INSPIRATION newsletter was started in 2005 as a way of providing helpful information including tips, articles and free inspirational eBooks to our visitors.

Today White Dove Books works in partnership with many authors and on-line publishers of inspirational material to provide a quality on-line service that serves thousands of people in many countries across the world.

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