13 Ways to Develop Laser-Like Focus

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Here are some surprising ways to help boost your focus and performance.

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If you want to be successful, you have to find strategies that will help you focus despite all of the distractions that prevent you from doing the task at hand. Luckily, with the help of science, developing laser-like focus is easier than you think.

To start, make sure you're sleeping well and getting regular exercise. These are the basis of productivity, performance and focus. Next, simply look at the color red -- just the sight of red can boost performance and focus. If that doesn't work, turning up the thermostat in your office is another option. According to research, people who work in a room set to around 77 degrees are more successful and focused than people in colder work spaces.

There are plenty of things you can do to boost your ability to focus. To learn more, here are 13 ways to develop laser-like focus.

1. Sleep.

Here's a no-brainer: sleep has a direct link to cognitive functions such as the ability to focus and perform. According to the National Sleep Foundation, quality sleep, which is between seven to nine hours, helps us think clearly, remember more and make decisions. A lack of sleep can result in an inability to pay attention and focus, lower productivity, slower reaction times and forgetfulness.

2. Use the ABC method.

According to Harvard Business Review, our brains are constantly distracted by "internal and external environments," meaning thoughts, sounds or interruptions. One way to prevent distractions is the ABC method. As HBR explains, ABC stands for: aware, breathe and choose. To start, become aware of your options by choosing whether to pay attention to distractions. Next, breathe and relax while you choose to focus or get distracted.

3. Meditate.

From stress to anxiety, meditation has long been known as an incredible tool in managing emotions. Another advantage of meditation is its ability to help people focus. Researchers found that after three months at a meditation retreat, people came out with an incredible ability to focus and an overall improvement in cognitive functions.

4. Get dressed up.

The saying, "Dress to impress," stands true. When people dress up in order to prep for a particular project or task, their ability to focus goes up. According to a study, students who wore white lab coats while conducting experiments made half the amount of errors as the students who were dressed regularly.

5. Don't multitask.

While multitasking might sound like the more productive thing to do, it actually has a negative effect on your ability to focus. According to the American Psychological Association, multitasking and constantly switching between tasks will actually take away from focus because you're not allowing yourself time to adjust to one thing.

6. Turn up the heat.

According to research, a warmer workplace will help you focus better and be more productive. In fact, one study found that a group of workers in a room set to 68 degrees made nearly 44 percent more errors and were half as productive than employees in a 77 degree room.

7. Go green.

Plants around the office have long been known to have a positive effect on employee morale, focus and productivity. However, it turns out you don't necessarily need actual plants for this. In a study, a group of researchers found that by taking a 40-second break and simply looking at a computerized image of a green roof, employees' focus on a particular task improved.

8. Look at the color red.

Whether it's the color of your bedroom walls or the background image on your computer screen, color has a major effect on us psychologically. A 2009 study published in *Science* found that when people saw the color red while they were focusing on certain tasks, their performance, memory and attention to detail improved.

9. Use natural light.

Working 9-to-5 in a windowless room with artificial light is far from motivating and in fact can be downright distracting. A study found that people who work in offices filled with natural light experience substantially less eye strain, headaches and blurred visions, all of which deter focus and performance.

10. Get your cardio in.

From better sleep to lower stress levels, exercise has many benefits, and that includes improved focus and performance too. In an article published in Harvard Health, researchers found aerobic exercise increases the size of the area in a person's brain called the hippocampus, which in turn results in better memory and thinking skills. However, this was not the case for exercise such as weight lifting and muscle toning, which had little to no impact on a person's cognitive abilities.

11. Drink some coffee.

According to research, a moderate amount of caffeine -- around one to two cups of coffee a day -- is beneficial to a person's focus, alertness, performance and mood. However, it's important not to overdo it, which can result in dehydration, anxiety and headaches.

12. Take a break.

It might sound ironic, but taking breaks can actually help improve focus. Research shows that short breaks restore a person's motivation and help them achieve long-term goals. According to an article published in *Psychology Today*, "Research suggests that, when faced with long tasks (such as studying before a final exam or doing your taxes), it is best to impose brief breaks on yourself. Brief mental breaks will actually help you stay focused on your task."

13. Listen to classical music.

Save your favorite rock or rap album for after work. Researchers from Stanford University discovered that classical music in particular triggers the part of the brain used for paying attention and focusing. Why classical? According to the study, people's minds tend to wander while listening to music but because classical music features many "transitional points" where there is silence, it helps keep people aware and attentive.