

FOCUS

DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION



ERIC LE RESTE

Distraction is a very modern but also, an ancient disease. Distraction can be as mild as daydreaming and building castles in the air, which does not cause a great deal of damage. However, distraction at the wheel of a car can have devastating consequences, and that too within just a second. It seems that many of us are being constantly distracted these days, by our cell phones. What we may not realise is that long-term mental distractions of this

kind can gradually erode the ability to focus when we really need to. It may not be just our over-attentiveness to our cell phones, it could also be a distraction because a relationship has turned sour, or we have money worries, or the deterioration of the health of aged parents. These can all seem 'reasonable' distractions that we should be thinking about, but when we are not thinking about what we should be thinking about, then that is a distraction. This habit can take us 'off track' for a long, long time, and we only realise years later that we were moving far away from our destination. We need to become aware of and understand the cost and the price we may have to pay for these distractions. Every moment of our lives are moments when we can accumulate happiness, peace, love, understand-

ing and power. Weigh that against all the time we waste, and we can begin to see how important it is to remain focused on life. At the time of death, will we be able to say that we have used our lives in a worthwhile way and have no regrets that we could have done better? The power of accumulation is exactly the same as when we feel stronger and stronger through exercise, when things feel easier and easier and more and more fulfilling. We cannot, though, keep accumulating if we keep losing energy and power over and over again. We all have aims and objectives and when we understand the value of time in reaching those goals; we will resist the side scenes. So where does this focus come from? It is in the complexity of concentration. Sometimes we become so busy in trying to control the mind, which is running



Focus comes from disciplining the intellect; the mind simply follows it.

off in all directions, but the focus is actually dependent on the yoga (connection) of the intellect. The mind and the intellect are faculties of the soul, the spiritual being within the physical body. There is a difference between

the mind and intellect. The mind creates thoughts all the time, all day, every day. The intellect, when it is 'awake' or alert, has the power of concentration and the ability to discriminate and judge what is the wisest course of action.

The mind just thinks and is full of emotion, the intellect manages those thoughts and emotions. If we visualise someone we care about, we use the intellect to do that. However, the moment the intellect focuses on that

person then the mind starts to create thoughts about them, and these thoughts evoke emotions connected to the way the person is and how the relationship works. So, it is the 'muscle' of the intellect that we need to teach to focus wherever we wish for as long as we wish, and the mind will follow. This is the real effort, to resist the temptation to control the mind and to guide the intellect to focus where we wish, whenever we wish. In Rajyoga, the focus of the intellect is on the Supreme Being, a point of light and an ocean of all goodness. If we focus the intellect on that point of light, the mind immediately begins to create thoughts about the qualities of God, and there is then an exchange of love that brings power and understanding to the soul. It is good to learn and practise creating focusing

the intellect. Over time we develop the security of our dignity. Every effort in spirituality protects our dignity and self-respect, self-esteem, and self-trust. This becomes a shield so that nothing that happens outside can penetrate or change the way we feel about the self, on the inside. The mind becomes more peaceful, it can catch ideas, thoughts, and feelings and become aware of the wonderful synchronicity that is happening all around us, but only if we focus. We can really capture what the inner silence is telling us. To connect to the Supreme, we need a very quiet mind and a focused intellect, and then it is easy to let the distractions just pass us by. *Eric Le Reste is a journalist and producer for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and coordinates the activities of Brahma Kumaris centres in Canada.*

MIND POWER

HOW TO MANAGE STRESS



B.K. SURYA

There are certain things in life that we have to accept if we want to live a stress-free life. We need to understand that everything in life is not going to be according to our preferences. Secondly, we can be a little more relaxed and light about the challenges that come our way. When we are easy about a problem, it gets solved easily. This applies to our physical health as well – when we remain easy about an ailment, it gets cured easily. The more stressed we are, the faster our mental energy is expended. Some people become stressed by worrying about the future, while others keep thinking of the past. A lot of people tend to live in the past - they hold on to painful memories, thereby suffering the pain over and over

again. Since they are stuck in the past, they neither enjoy the present nor can they create a better future for themselves. Those who hold on to the past in this manner tend to hold on to their ailments as well. They keep thinking about their illness and make themselves all the more ill. Some spiritual practices can help us gain greater control over our thoughts, and thereby our life. The first step is to recognise the fact that we are souls. The soul is a subtle sentient point of energy, residing in the centre of the forehead. Every thought the soul creates carries some energy, in the form of subtle vibrations. These affect our brain, the rest of the body, and radiate from us to create an aura that others can sense. When we create thoughts of peace, such as "I am peaceful... peace is my natural state of being..." we experience that peace. The mind calms down, the body relaxes. There are fewer thoughts and our emotions subside. Consciously and repeatedly creating such thoughts enables us to have a deeper experience of peace. The more peaceful we are, the stronger our mind becomes. In similar fashion, we generate stress by creating



To avoid, reduce, and overcome stress, we need to make our mind strong.

the wrong kind of thoughts. For example, if there is a special dish for dinner, but the cook forgot to add salt, some people will laugh it off, add the salt themselves and enjoy the meal. A few others, however, would lose their temper, berate the cook and end up spoiling

their own mood as well as the atmosphere of the house. To avoid, reduce, and eliminate stress from our life, we need to make our mind strong. Stress, in fact, is a creation of a weak mind. And the mind is weakened by unnecessary and negative thoughts that

are influenced by any vice, be it anger, ego, or greed. The mind can be made powerful by some simple practices. When we wake up in the morning, we can create certain thoughts every day, such as, 'I am powerful... I am a child of God, the Almighty... Being His child, I

too am like Him... powerful, peaceful, and stable...' Regularly practicing this awakens the latent powers of the soul, and then we will find that we do not get upset, afraid, or angry very easily. The biggest source of strength for the soul is God. We can connect with Him simply by remembering Him. Through this mental link we can draw His powers and virtues, by remembering them and recognising, accepting, and affirming the fact that God has bestowed on me all that He possesses. This practice is called meditation. It is a tool by which the mind can be made infinitely powerful. However, having a powerful mind does not mean that everything in life will happen as we wish. There will be obstacles, failures, and tragedies, as there are numerous actors, factors, and forces at play and not all of them are in our control. But if we develop the habit of accepting things that we cannot control, and of learning from them, with the conviction that there is some benefit in everything, they will not cause us stress or sorrow. *B.K. Surya is a Rajyoga teacher at the Brahma Kumaris headquarters in Mount Abu, Rajasthan.*

A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

A life lived with the purpose of bringing benefit to others creates a feeling of richness and abundance inside. My heart is fulfilled when I give. Then I don't need many material possessions to be happy. Today let me give and live a rich fulfilling life.

PERSPECTIVE

What do we choose to see?



B.K. DR. SAVITA

What you see is what you get, often abbreviated as WYSIWYG, means what you see on the computer screen is exactly the same as will be printed or displayed. This holds true not just in computing but in real life as well. Our experience of life is determined to a large extent by how we see, or choose to see, it. As your vision, so your world, goes a saying. And we see life not as it is, but as we are. If we see life as a struggle, it will become a grind for us. The lens

through which we see can make routine tasks look difficult, and minor inconveniences seem unbearable. Such a perspective is the result of a feeble mental state, and it further weakens the mind, dragging us down to an abyss of despondency. Something similar happens in relationships. If we see people as generally untrustworthy, then we will be unable to trust anyone, and suffer for it. We may not have any close and warm relationships, and will be dogged by fear, doubt, and worry. That is not a very happy way to live. Our experiences in the present life, and past ones, colour our perception of the world and of how the people around us behave. Our fears, anxieties, doubts, and preferences are, to varying degrees, the result of how we see the world. If we have an upbeat outlook, we take problems as challenges, tackle them



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spiritedly, and take the consequences in our stride,

meanwhile learning from the experience. Failures do

not put us down, rather they become stepping stones to

wiser decisions in future. But if we are gloomy by na-

ture, our cheerless existence itself will feel like a burden to us, with each difficult person or situation, and every setback serving to confirm the wretchedness of life. True, the world has its ugly side, which cannot be overlooked or denied, but it also has its bright spots. We may have to deal with distressing things on a daily basis, but we need not focus exclusively on them. How much attention and emotion we invest in them is up to us. What do we gain by repeatedly thinking of the appalling things happening in the world? If it is something that affects me personally, I can try to understand the reason behind it and figure out a way to deal with it in the best possible manner. Having done that, I need to shift my focus to the brighter side of life, because that is what is going to empower me, by making me feel posi-

tive. When we habitually and repeatedly dwell on the dark side of life, the resultant feelings drain our energy and joy. But when we step back and see the larger picture, recognise what is of value to us, and engage with that, our time and energy are utilised in a constructive way, leading to learning and growth. Just think of it, if we have to walk along a muddy track, do we get stuck in one spot, appalled by the sight of the mud, or do we step on the relatively dry spots and make our way forward? That is how we need to navigate life, by spotting the good in it, avoiding or dealing sensibly with what is harmful, moving ahead, and helping others do the same. *B.K. Dr. Savita is a Rajyoga teacher at the Brahma Kumaris headquarters in Abu Road, Rajasthan.*