

My brain is all over the place, time to refocus.

Today I woke up and realised that I needed to get a whole lot done– but I was not at all focused. The days had run me thinking. Being unfocused lockdown period, or perhaps or even after a particularly long periods of time with our waiting for the next pleasure as we look for excitement or study done.



one into another and I so this got is how it is for many during the coming back from a school break difficult day. It may also be with smart phones are brains are hit and so we get distracted easily Trouble is it does not get the work

How can we support ourselves to focus our brain, calm our thinking so we can take time to think and learn? Then, how can we use these ideas with our students to support their learning?

The problem is, for whatever reason, our brain is not working at its best. We cannot think as clearly and rationally as we normally would. We may be tense; muscles might be tight around our neck and shoulders. Maybe our stomach is tight. We might be feeling anxious and overwhelmed.

We wonder what we can do to be thinking optimally. How to relax and not be so tense and wound up like a spring. It might be that when we are worried, we think we can't do much about it. It begins to impact on our self-confidence and think that will never be able to get back to be the smart person who works hard, gets good results, is well liked and sociable.

So how to focus the mind. We can do this in two ways.

1. By slowing our breathing down and breathing correctly.

When we learn how to manage our breathing we are able to think more clearly and solve problems more easily. We are calmer under stress.

It also has been shown to improve high blood pressure, pain management, sleep problems and depression and anxiety.

Imagine if we were able to feel calm every-day? And, what if, just for the practice of breathing slowly for 1 minute a day we could.

Here is an exercise that we can do – right now in fact. Read the instructions then give it a go.

Step one: count the number of times you breathe out in one minute. Time yourself. Write that number down on a piece of paper.

Step two: Now, repeat the exercise, count how many times you breathe out in one minute but this time work to halve the number of breathes.

Start by taking a big deep breathe in one, two, three go.

Write down the number. Did you make improvement?



If you did not, repeat the exercise a couple more times. What do you notice? How do you feel?

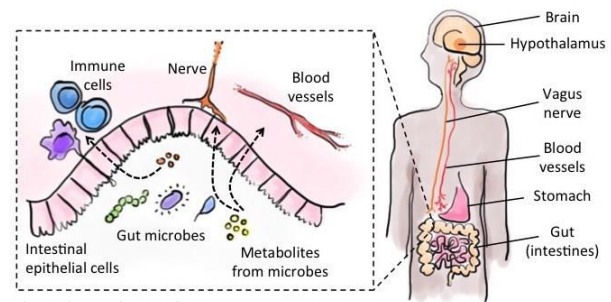
Let me explain why this works:

Our body is made up of the autonomic nervous system (our bodies auto pilot systems) which keeps us alive even when we sleep – breathing, heart rate, blood flow and digestion. But just like a fish swimming in water we don't even know we are doing it.

Breathing is the only aspect of that system that we can influence.

Technically, what is happening is through the Vagus Nerve (which links your heart, lungs and digestive tract), when you purposefully calm your breathing the Vagus nerve acts like a brake and slows down your entire nervous system.

By breathing slowly, between 4.5 and 6 breathes a minute you decrease your heart rate and increase the production of calming hormones. So, in short slowing your breathing down triggers a 'relaxation response' in the brain and body.



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2 The second idea it to practice a focus exercise

Choose an object – anything will do - it might be something on your desk, something special to you or an ordinary stone or shell. Start by examining it – notice the colours, angles, the way the light plays on the surface of the object. Allow yourself to enjoy the sight of the object.

Now feel the object, exploring it with your touch. Perhaps on your cheek as well as your fingers. Is it smooth, rough, hot, cold or warm.

Give yourself permission to become fully absorbed in your object, pouring yourself into the experience of examining your object. Appreciate the uniqueness of this object.

Now notice how you feel.

As we practice being fully absorbed in our object, we notice our focus can stay on our appreciation for this simple thing. There is little room for past or future, we are in the now. When we are in the now there is little room for regret, worry or distraction. You are fully in the present.

Application in the classroom.

Think now about how your classroom can create a starting and finishing ritual of breathing and refocusing. It may be through a song, a prayer, an exercise.

It may be that you create an agreement with your students that they do a breathing exercise between subjects, after a heated debate or an uncomfortable moment.

What ever you do, do it. And when you do you will be changing lives. Thanks for your great work and good luck with applying.