



THE MOTHERSHIP



TOOLKIT WORKBOOK
MARCH 2018



ATTENTION, FOCUS & DISTRACTION

ATTENTION, FOCUS & DISTRACTION

Our theme for this month is 'Attention, focus and distraction'.

We're not just talking about time management here... we can't actually manage time anyway!

Productivity isn't just about getting stuff done, it's about getting the right stuff done and the experience of work and life.

"True productivity is satisfaction where work and life meet"

It's all about the quality of work as well as the quantity of work that you are doing. Think of it in terms of effective over efficient.

Sometimes productivity is about making space... What matters to me and what I want to make space for.

EXERCISE 1

SETTING UP YOUR DAYS AND WEEKS TO MAXIMISE PRODUCTIVITY

How do you set up your days and weeks to maximise productivity?

We all have a need for different amounts of structure and some will like detailed scheduling, others will find this too restrictive. Consider the river analogy and think about your rhythm. Rhythm has a steady beat and can be tailored so that it is completely unique. If we go through our days and weeks purely just reacting to things it becomes overwhelming.

Prompt #1: What rhythm do you want / need to have in your life?

- Exactly how much structure and what scheduling do YOU need to make sure the right actions are happening and you are moving towards the things you want to build or create in your life? You also need to allow space for the stuff you can't plan for as the reality is things will come up and life is unpredictable.
- What rhythm do you have currently and is it working? Is there too much structure and you are constantly finding yourself frustrated when things get in the way of your maxed out schedule (no room for contingency)? Or is there too little and you feel all over the place and too reactive?

Notes:

Prompt #2: What type of rhythm would you like to implement?

- Are there certain types of activity or tasks that you want to time block over your week / month going forward?

e.g

Monday = Marketing and Social Media planning

Tuesday = Finances

OR

Monday = Team catch ups

Tuesday = Project work on X

- Are there set pieces, 'scaffolding' you would want to plan around for your coming weeks / months? e.g set diarised meetings, when you will do certain regular work with specific deadlines.

- If so, try drafting this out and give it a go, you can get as specific and detailed as feels right for you. It may take more than one week to really make this new rhythm work so expect to have some adaptations and don't forget to plan in time for contingencies.

Notes:

Prompt #3: What rituals and routines would you like to implement?

- Rituals are the things you want to think about, routines are the things you don't want to have to think about but know need to happen, e.g doing your expenses might be a routine, needs to happen every month, you don't want to have to worry about it. Doing a weekly review (stopping to do some quality thinking, reflecting, planning ahead, brainstorming) is a ritual you want to consider and prioritise.

- Thinking time often doesn't feel like work but making time for this is absolutely crucial. It is our best work, the work we do depends on the quality of our thinking. So actually, adding in a ritual of stopping to do this is pretty crucial.

- Consider the rhythm you drafted out or maybe wrote about above, are there any rituals or routines you would you want to layer on?

e.g

Routine - time blocking an hour to reply to emails at the end of each day.

Ritual - scheduling 2 hours at the end of each week for review progress and plan, making time once a month for a brainstorming session and review of your goals

- Is there any protected space you want to create?

Notes:

Prompt #4: Have you planned in time to recover and re-energise?

- Review your diary over the coming week or month. What will drain your energy?
- What re-charges your energy? e.g being on your own, reading, meeting someone for a coffee, listening to a podcast, going for a run
- Can you now actually plan in time in your diary for re-charging? Think of this as fuel, not a luxury, it is as important as booking travel. Down time shouldn't be an after thought or something you do when work is finished. Chances are work will never be finished! Look at your diary for the coming weeks, plot in specific time, in the appropriate places for re-charging so that you can do your very best work.

Notes:

EXERCISE 2

MANAGING DISTRACTIONS

Distractions can be a huge problem both in terms of actually doing our best work and also getting things done.

The first step in terms of minimising distractions is to recognise where they are coming from:

Prompt #1: External distractions - what or who is distracting you currently?

- How many notifications have you got on your phone or desktop?
 - Do you have email pop ups, phone notifications, social media?
- Go into your settings and silence some of the distractions. YOU choose when to respond and when you communicate.

Prompt #2: Internal distractions – how often are you distracted within your own head?

- How often are you distracted by things that just pop into your head? Try creating a second brain, don't keep things in your head, write lists, capture things digitally, keep a pad of post-it notes next to you so your brain can be happy that these distractions are logged but you can carry on without doing the task immediately.
- Free up your headspace!

Notes:

EXERCISE 3

CHANNELLING YOUR ATTENTION

We all have focus, it's about learning where it goes and what takes it away.

Consider this as signal and noise. The goal is to reduce / manage the noise and increase the signal - what you want to tune into, what you want to focus on. That way you channel your attention onto the right things.

Visual clues are a great way to remind you what you want to pay attention to e.g written on a post-it note.

One way in which our focus is taken away is through a lack of boundaries!

Do you say yes to things that aren't your focus?

"If I want to say a wholehearted yes to something I will have to say a clear no to something else"

- Consider the last few weeks, did you say yes to anything that didn't fit with your agenda and / or where you probably weren't the best person for the job?

- Do you find yourself saying yes to things that you don't really want to do?

You end up doing a bad job on all levels without boundaries.

Note down and try out these two handy ways to say no but in a positive and supportive way:

"I'm not the best person to help you with that but let me suggest someone who is..."

"Right now my attention is somewhere else so you won't get the best from me, but how about we catch up on X"

Notes:

TOOLKIT PROJECT

This month our project is to do an **attention audit**. You might want to do this on one day or over the course of a week to get really clear results.

Take 5 minutes at the beginning of your working day and think about what you want your signal to be. What is your number one focus for the day, what deserves your attention? This is a really good activity to do in itself in terms of achieving your goals and being productive. You might want to write this on a post-it note and stick it somewhere prominent, write it in the front of your notebook or bullet journal or make a note of it somewhere digitally.

Throughout the day notice when you have been distracted. Recognise the noise and what has taken you away from your focus, your signal. You could do a log of this throughout the day or just keep a mental note.

At the end of the day review your noise. Write down and then notice what is taking your attention, what is stealing your focus and getting in your way. Do this with a sense of experimentation, be an observer.

"Approach it with the spirit of curiosity rather than the spirit of judgement"

Importantly, don't forget the final step.

What can you do about the distractions? What actions can you now take to reduce the noise and increase your signal moving forward?

As always we'll chat about this on our March monthly hangout or you can share your experiences, learnings and thoughts within the workspace at any point.



We really hope you've enjoyed this month's Toolkit on Attention, Focus and Distraction and found it useful and inspiring.

You can find out more about Grace over on the following:

www.grace-marshall.com

Blog posts, coaching information, workshops and freebies.

She would also love to hear from you on Twitter and Facebook

[@gracemarshall](https://twitter.com/gracemarshall)

Looking forward to seeing you again soon here in The Toolkit and we hope you love next month's skill / tool!

Helen & Anna

x