Concentration Worksheet

Self – Assessment Exercise:

*Check the statements that apply to you:*

* I am easily distracted when I study.
* My mind wonders when I read.
* I can’t seem to find the time to study.
* I tend to procrastinate and put off studying to do something else.
* My mind goes blank on a test.
* If I do not like the instructor, I lose interest and do not pay attention.
* If the subject does not relate to my career goals, I lose interest.
* If an assignment is too difficult, I usually do not stick with it.
* I do not have a career goal, or a reason to study.
* It’s hard for me to take notes and listen at the same time.
* Others:

Possible causes for poor concentration:

Internal Factors:

* Physical distractions – Irregular eating, sleeping, and exercise patterns,
* depression, anxiety, chronic pain or other related health
* and mental health issues.
* Emotion preoccupation or distraction – Personal issues or crisis ie. relationship break-up, job loss
* Excessive worry – Preoccupation and fear about future, failure, etc.
* Negative self-talk – Critical, comparative or perfectionist thinking
* Lack of career direction
* Lack of clarity or confusion regarding course work or expectations
* Other:

External Factors:

* People talking
* Noise distractions – TV, people talking, music, telephone
* Light too dim/bright
* Temperature too high/low
* Time pressures
* Social distractions – invitations, family needs, time with friends
* Discouraging words from others
* Lack of adequate materials or resources to complete the task
* Physical danger or threat
* Other:

I am most focused and alert when I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Concentration Techniques:**

If you find your mind wandering, try some techniques to get your mind on the right track and paying attention to your study material.

**“BE HERE NOW” TECHNIQUE:**

* When you notice your thoughts wandering, say to yourself, “BE HERE NOW”
* Focus on your study or lecture and maintain your attention as long as possible.
* When your mind wanders again, repeat, “BE HERE NOW”.
* Each time your mind wanders, gently bring it back by repeating “BE HERE NOW”
  + Do not try to keep specific thoughts out of your mind.
* The more you try not to think about something, the more you end up thinking about it
  + Simply recognize the thought, allow it to be and erase it from you mind by saying, “BE HERE NOW”
* It is normal to have to do this several hundred times per week
  + With practice, you will notice that your attention becomes more focused and your wandering thoughts become less frequent
* You may also use this technique to regain your concentration when you become distracted by an external distraction (ie. background noise)
  + Just say, “LET THEM BE OUT THERE”, and redirect your focus to your study or lecture

**PRACTICE RELAXATION AND MEDITATION**:

* Learn CONTROLLED BREATHING
  + Put one hand on your upper chest and one on your stomach, the hand on your stomach moves out as you breathe in
  + Try breathing in for a count of 4 and out to a count of 4 for 4 min.
  + This technique optimizes oxygen intake, helping the brain to be alert
* Learn PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION
  + Tense and relax each major muscle group (ie. feet, calves, thighs etc)
  + Tense each muscle group for 5 seconds, relax for 10-15 seconds
* Learn MEDITATION
  + Imagery meditation involves actively visualizing scenes that are tranquil, safe and relaxing to you
  + Choose scenes that are imagined/remembered and incorporate as many of your senses as possible (smell, taste, tactile, visual)
  + With practice, these techniques may be effectively implemented during a lecture, study period or exam.