

Welcome back to our summer of systems where we're talking about little systems that can make a big difference. And if implemented over the summer can mean a long game change for your time and productivity. So today we're actually going to talk specifically about time management and how you can trick yourself into focusing.

And we're going to implement this now because everything else that comes after it is going to require some sort of focus. And if you can't focus now because you're allowing yourself to get too distracted. Then the systems aren't going to matter because you're not going to be saving yourself time anyway.

In the long run, you need to be able to focus on what matters right then and there so that you can move on to whatever you want when it's done.

So today we're going to focus on three different tactics for how you can force your focus. And I say this from experience because I just finished getting off my phone. Scrolling through the Instagrams for probably the last 25 minutes. I have so much that I need to get done and I should get done. And my block schedule is helping guide me on what needs to happen, but I'm finding myself slipping from that.

I'll link the block, scheduling episodes in the show notes, if you're interested in what in the world that means, but it's a great outline for how you can spend your time and make sure you're still getting things done that are important to you. When it comes to focusing though. There's a lot of distractions. So number one, we're going to distract the distractions.

And this is one of my favorite tips. What is the thing that is distracting you or keeping you from being able to accomplish the task at hand? It could be your phone. It could be the vastness of the internet. It could be your own children, whatever is causing a distraction. You need to distract it. When it comes to my phone. My favorite way to distract the distraction is to go ahead and time-lapse video of myself doing the task, whether it's grading, cleaning up the kitchen, putting away laundry, or even just time ops and myself, reading to force myself to get some of that done.

I love to use this tip whenever I'm feeling a little bit overwhelmed. And I know that the pressure is on to get a task that is undesirable done, because there's something really satisfying about watching it back and seeing your accomplishment play out in front of you and then posting it to social media so that other people can see what you've accomplished too.

Sometimes the distraction is your own children. And this might be a time to pull out some tablets or to put them into a game or an activity that you know, that there are self-driven on and that they can handle what is going to come their way. When they're younger, that's so hard to do so you need to give yourself some slack and realize that it just might not be the right season.

But even students, you know, what's great about giving a class project on something is that they need to be self-driven and self-motivated to get through that, which means that you can get things done in the background. So, whatever you need to do, whatever is the most distracting towards what has to get done.

Distract the distraction. That's number one.

Number two is for the gamifiers out there. Our students really love when we turn something into a game or a challenge, but we can do that for ourselves too. You can challenge yourself to see how much you can get done in a certain amount of time or challenge yourself to be able to complete a task faster than you expected, or just challenge yourself to actually get it done the day that you said you're going to do it.

And then the key is if you succeed at that challenge, give yourself a reward. Now this could be a reward that you were already expecting to receive, but if you don't complete it, then that's eliminated from your day. For example, I need to go put my laundry away again. There's always more laundry, no matter what I do. It's one of the reasons I don't like it. And then later today I take my kids to gymnastics. At gymnastics, I take that as "me time".

I do a lot of relaxing things for me during gymnastics. I read a book that I like. I go take a doodle journal. I do whatever I need to do to take some time in for me. But what I could do instead is actually take something else that I need to work on. Something that's not as relaxing as something that still needs to be completed. So if I put my laundry away, then I'm going to reward myself with a book that I'm taking to gymnastics and giving myself an hour of just sitting there and reading a book that I enjoy. If I don't put my laundry away.

I'm going to take my laptop and do some work. And something so simple, but it's something that can work wonders. We like to have rewards and we like to have some motivator to get through a task that we don't really like. So it keeps you focused and it keeps you driven. And I really like the time element on this. Not only because I like block schedules, which have an end time for when you're supposed to work on each different step.

But also, because there's something magical when you feel like you're up against the clock and you get things done a lot quicker and sometimes a lot better than you would if you gave yourself too much time. So number three is going to be. Accountability. But with a twist. I think that we need to start working with each other on accountability. We need to start really having somebody else in the room while we work, who can sit there and yell at us. Somebody who's willing to yell at you and call you out.

This actually became a much bigger thing in one of the groups that I'm in, over COVID, is that you would do Zoom work hours. So even though we were all trapped at home, we had kids, we had all these things that we needed to get done. We'd get on zoom and we would leave our cameras on. Weird. I know. And we would just work for an hour, but you had people there who were holding you accountable. You said what you were going to get done. And at the end of the hour, you reported how far you got.

So if you're working on getting some grading done, why not invite another teacher just into the room so that you guys can both grade together? And then you can keep each other accountable. You can help each other out or you can look at common problems and threads that you're seeing in your assignments. And then you can knock two birds out with one stone because then you're reviewing and reflecting on the assignment that you gave. It's really a win-win.

Now in person, accountability is a lot. But when you do it right, it is the most. Forced focus way. You're kind of getting things done. And this can be as small as even just telling your kids that you need to make your bed.

And so do they, and if you all do it, then you can add in the challenge and reward section and go out on a nice walk or buy some new bubbles because who doesn't love a new thing of bubbles.

The trick is going to be that it's not one size fits all. Maybe two of these really work for you and one doesn't or maybe only one really works out the way that you want it to. Maybe you need to combine or mix and match some of the strategies. Either way, I hope you can take one of these three tips for forcing focus and implement it into your day so that you can get more done. In less time.

And then we're going to start adding in some other simple systems that are going to save you even more time. And you're going to see a huge change. And what you're able to accomplish. Until next time.