

DAY 1 - LESSON 1

Facilitation & Discussion Guide

SUMMARY

This lesson helps students understand why training attention is so valuable. It begins with a montage of celebrities talking about the importance of training the mind. Then it goes on to explain in more detail why training attention is one of the most effective ways to train the mind.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Recognize that the world is competing for your attention
- Explain how attention shapes what you notice and experience (e.g. camera metaphor)
- Describe how using the Focus Coach tool is an efficient way to train your focus

QUESTIONS EMBEDDED IN LESSON 1

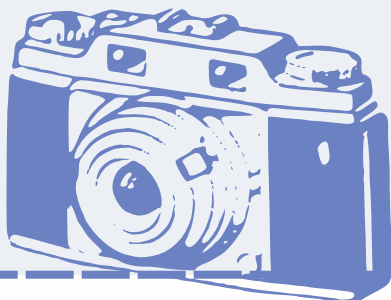
- 1

J Cole doesn't want to be a slave to his:

 - Mind
 - **Thoughts**
 - Body
- 2

The mind is like a _____. The more you train it, the stronger it becomes.

 - memory
 - master
 - **muscle**



OPTIONAL DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITY PROMPTS

Activity	Prompts
Personal Sharing in Pairs [3-5 minutes]	• When do you feel most distracted? • Are these distractions internal (e.g. thoughts, worries) or external (e.g. phone, friends)? • Are there any downsides to getting distracted?
Societal Observation [5-7 minutes]	Some people say we're living in an "attention economy" where companies and apps are scheming to make a profit off our limited attention. • Can you think of any examples of apps/companies that do this? • Why do they want our attention? How do they make money off it?

DAY 2 - LESSON 2

Facilitation & Discussion Guide



SUMMARY

Training attention gives us more influence over what we experience in life. The first step to training attention is choosing an anchor, which means making a deliberate decision about where to focus. This decision also helps you avoid multitasking during tasks that require your full attention. The second step is to practice the skills of focusing and releasing by directing your attention to your anchor and letting go of the inevitable distractions that arise. With practice, we can learn to use these simple but powerful skills to improve our lives.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand that multitasking makes it harder to learn new things
- Recognize that regardless of your baseline level of focus, attention is a trainable skill
- Explain and differentiate the skills of anchoring, focusing, and releasing

QUESTIONS EMBEDDED IN LESSON 2

- 1 **Challenge accepted?**

 - Yeah, I'm ready to dive in!
 - I'm still not sold on this course.
- 2 **In general, how good are you at focusing?**

 - I get distracted a lot
 - It's easy for me to focus
- 3 **Anchoring means making a _____ about where to focus.**

 - guess
 - **decision**
 - mistake
- 4 **In what area of life do you think the skills of focusing and releasing would be most helpful? (free response)**
- 5 **What is it called when you make a deliberate decision about where you plan to direct your attention?**

 - **Anchoring**
 - Focusing
 - Releasing
- 6 **What is it called when you direct your attention to a specific thing?**

 - Anchoring
 - **Focusing**
 - Releasing



OPTIONAL DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITY PROMPTS

Activity	Prompts
Peer Observation [2-3 minutes]	In what ways do students at our school multitask?
Extreme Multitasking [5-8 minutes]	Goals: This exercise can help students understand: (1) how hard it is to multitask when two tasks both require concentration and (2) that multitasking often means rapidly switching attention back and forth between two things.
	Instructions: What is it like to multitask when both tasks require your concentration? Let's try it! Break into pairs and decide who will go first. Then for 30 seconds, one person will write about what they did yesterday while simultaneously telling their partner what they're going to do this upcoming weekend. When time is up, the multitasker reads their story out loud. Then switch roles. As a final step, both partners take 30 seconds to only write about what they did yesterday (no multitasking). When time is up, both stories out loud.
	Post-Activity Discussion: • What was it like to try to do both tasks at once? • Did you notice your attention switching back and forth between the two tasks? • How much easier was it to write without multitasking? • What are some comparable examples of multitasking that you actually try to do (e.g. listening in class while doing homework for another class)?
Personal Sharing [2-5 minutes]	In what situations would it be helpful for you to more deliberately choose a single anchor for your attention?

DAY 5 - LESSON 3

Facilitation & Discussion Guide



SUMMARY

Thoughts are like bolts of lightning, here one second and gone the next. You can't prevent thoughts from arising, but you can control which thoughts you engage with and which you release. If you don't give a thought your attention, it naturally fades away. But if you engage with a thought by turning it into an extended train of thought, you give it power. These trains of thought are called "thinking", and they strongly influence our experience of life. One strategy to let go of pointless or counterproductive thoughts is called re-focusing. This involves releasing a thought and then anchoring your attention on something more worthwhile.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand that thoughts are short-lived; they only grow into trains of thoughts when you give them attention
- Explain how releasing a thought entails no longer giving it attention so it naturally fades away
- Describe the strategy of re-focusing and how it can be helpful with counterproductive thoughts

QUESTIONS EMBEDDED IN LESSON 3

- 1 **Attention helps you focus on what truly _____ .**

 - **matters**
 - exists
 - lasts
- 2 **Connect the pairs. Draw a line between the matching pairs (or highlight each pair with a different color):**

Distraction Something that pulls your attention away

Anchoring Concentrating on a specific thing

Releasing Choosing not to engage with a distraction

Focusing Choosing where you're going to focus
- 3 **It's easier to release thoughts if you understand how _____ they are.**

 - **short-lasting**
 - long-lasting
 - strong
 - true
- 4 **Why does engaging with a thought give it power?**

 - It pushes the thought into your unconscious
 - **It creates more thoughts that are similar**
 - It makes the initial thought last longer
- 5 **If you're having a ton of self-critical thoughts, how could you use the strategy of re-focusing?**

 - Push the thoughts away so they don't affect you
 - Think about why the thoughts are untrue
 - **Release the thoughts and anchor on something else**
- 6 **If someone was feeling self-conscious at a party, how could they use the strategy of re-focusing?**



OPTIONAL DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITY PROMPTS

Activity	Prompts
Comprehension Check [2-4 minutes]	What's the difference between preventing a thought vs. releasing a thought? Answer: Preventing a thought means stopping a thought from ever popping into your head (which is impossible). When you release a thought, you notice that a thought has already popped into your head and you let it naturally drift away. We can do this by not giving it any more attention. Without elaboration, it fades away. Our minds naturally produce thoughts all the time. If you try to block a thought from entering your mind, it is even more likely to pop up.

Activity	Prompts
Thought Suppression [5-8 minutes]	Goals: Help students understand that trying to prevent thoughts doesn't work.
	Instructions: "For the next 20 seconds, don't think about a white bear. Whatever you do, don't think about a white bear. You can think about anything else but no white bears. Go!"
	Post-Activity Discussion: Take a poll to see how many students thought about/visualized a white bear despite trying not to.
	Context: Trying not to think about a white bear is actually a famous psychological test used by a Harvard scientist named Dr. Dan Wegner. For more than a decade, his research suggests that attempts to prevent thoughts lead to the greater occurrence of those exact thoughts. The more effective approach is to accept that thoughts will always pop into your mind and to release the ones that aren't helpful.
Personal Sharing in Pairs [3-5 minutes]	• What's an example of a time where you re-focused on something more worthwhile? • What thought did you have originally, and where did you re-focus?

DAY 8 - LESSON 4

Facilitation & Discussion Guide

SUMMARY

Evaluations are judgments about something’s worth, and they often boil down to whether we like something or not. Evaluations are like filters that we add to a photo, changing the way we see a situation. Evaluations can be helpful, but sometimes they are unnecessary or even harmful. Fortunately, we can release evaluations just as we can release any other thought. One useful strategy is called re-evaluating. This is where we release the original evaluation and choose to focus on another evaluation that we find true and more helpful. It’s like changing the filter on your photo. This isn’t about pretending things are great when they’re not, it’s about seeing things as they are and then choosing an evaluation that makes things better rather than one that makes things worse.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Differentiate a description from an evaluation
- Explain how re-evaluating works (e.g. upgrading a camera filter metaphor)
- Describe how thoughts and evaluations can fuel our emotions (e.g. fire metaphor)

QUESTIONS EMBEDDED IN LESSON 4

- 1 **Trying to prevent a thought makes it _____ likely to pop into your head.**

 - less
 - **more**
 - equally
- 2 **Connect the pairs. Draw a line between the matching pairs (or highlight each pair with a different color):**

Thousands # of thoughts we have each day
1-2 seconds Length of a single thought
Multitasking Doing 2 things that require focus at the same time
Releasing Choosing not to engage with a distraction
- 3 **Connect the pairs.**

Negative evaluation Disgusting
Description Spicy
Positive evaluation Delicious
- 4 **Our thoughts and evaluations act as fuel that _____ our emotions.**

 - **Intensify**
 - Decrease
 - Block
- 5 **Re-evaluating is like _____ the filter on a photo.**

 - Disliking
 - Removing
 - **Upgrading**
- 6 **Connect the pairs.**

Description This shirt is blue
Re-evaluating This shirt is ugly, but it’s comfortable
Evaluating This shirt is ugly
- 7 **How would you describe “re-evaluating” in your own words?**



OPTIONAL DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITY PROMPTS

Activity	Prompts
Comprehension Check [2-4 minutes]	How are evaluations like camera filters? Answer: A photo shows you what’s in a scene. When you add a camera filter, the scene stays the same but it looks different. Some filters make a photo better some make a photo worse. Similarly, some evaluations make life better and some make it worse.
Peer Observation [2-4 minutes]	• What's an example of an evaluation that can make a little thing seem like a big problem? • How does the evaluation “fuel the fire”?
Personal Sharing in Pairs [3-5 minutes]	Describe a time in your life when you or someone you knew re-evaluated an experience in a positive way. For example: I was upset that I was going to be stuck in a car on a road trip with my family for a week. My friend helped me re-evaluate the roadtrip as a time to practice my photography skills in new places.