



ASSUAGE

ASSUAGE INSIGHT | ISSUE NO. 03

THE ASSUAGE INSIGHT

FINDING YOUR FOCUS

*Understanding
Concentration, Mental
Clarity & Protecting
Your Cognitive Energy*

*“Quiet the mind, and the
clarity will follow.”*

Therapy that meets you where you are.





WHY CAN'T I FOCUS ANYMORE?

You sit down to answer one email.

Before you finish the first sentence, your phone lights up. You check the notification and remember that you need to return a call. Then you notice the laundry basket. While gathering clothes, you start thinking about tomorrow's meeting, an unpaid bill, what everyone will eat for dinner, and a conversation from yesterday that still does not feel resolved.

A few minutes later, you realize you never finished the email.

By lunchtime, you feel mentally exhausted—even though you are not sure what you actually accomplished.

Does this sound familiar?

Perhaps you have been:

- Reading the same paragraph several times without absorbing it.
- Walking into a room and forgetting why you went there.
- Beginning several tasks but struggling to finish one.
- Losing your train of thought during conversations.
- Forgetting appointments, names or everyday responsibilities.
- Feeling busy all day but dissatisfied with your progress.
- Reaching the end of the day with no mental energy left.

You may have started wondering?

Why can't I focus anymore?

Am I becoming lazy?

Why does everything feel harder than it used to?

What is wrong with me?





YOUR BRAIN MAY BE OVERWHELMED

Before criticizing yourself, consider another possibility...

Your brain may be overwhelmed.

Concentration is not simply a matter of willpower. Your ability to focus is affected by anxiety, depression, grief, trauma, chronic stress, inadequate sleep, poor nutrition, dehydration, overstimulation and the number of unresolved demands competing for your attention.

When your mental bandwidth is overloaded, your brain begins deciding what deserves immediate attention and what can wait. Unfortunately, the task you are trying to complete may not be the task your nervous system believes is most urgent.

That does not mean you are incapable or unmotivated.

It means your brain is attempting to manage more information, emotion and responsibility than it can comfortably process at once.

This month, we are exploring what concentration really requires, why stress interferes with mental clarity and how small daily changes can help you protect your cognitive energy.

THIS MONTH'S REMINDER

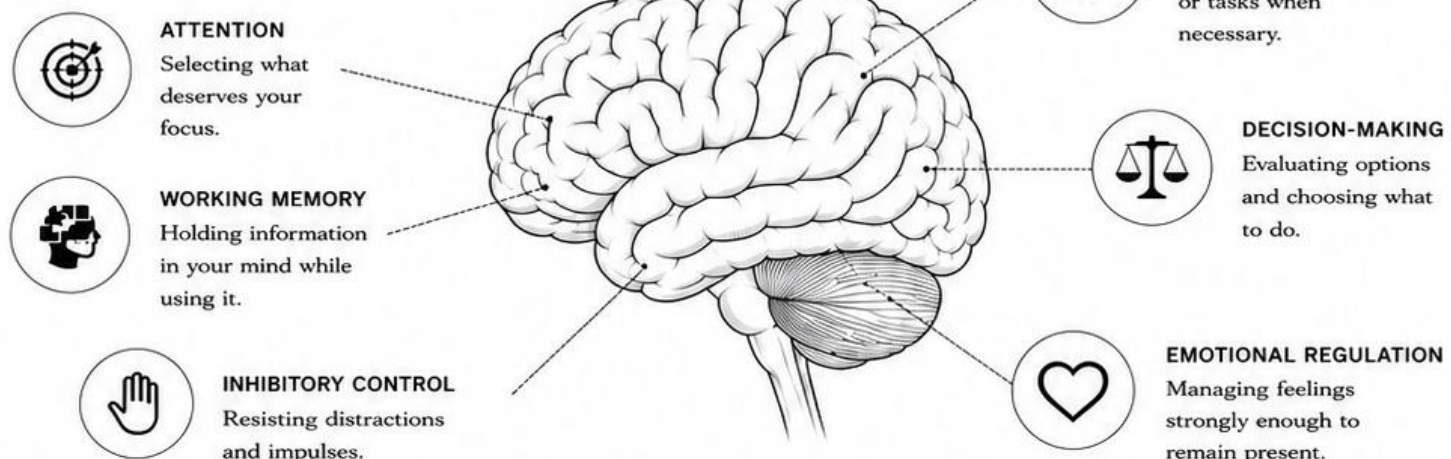
Nothing is wrong with you.

Your brain may be responding exactly as it was designed to respond under stress—and there are things you can do to support it.

WHAT IS HAPPENING INSIDE YOUR BRAIN?

Concentration is the ability to direct your attention toward one source of information while filtering out competing thoughts, sensations and distractions.

Although focusing may feel automatic, it requires several mental processes to work together:



STRESS CHANGES WHAT YOUR BRAIN PRIORITIZES.

Your brain is always scanning your environment for information that may affect your safety and well-being.

When you are calm and adequately rested, your brain has more capacity for planning, learning, problem-solving and sustained attention.

When you are stressed, your nervous system becomes more focused on identifying problems, anticipating danger and preparing you to respond. Stress-related changes can interfere with working memory, attention, inhibition and cognitive flexibility—the very skills required to concentrate and complete tasks.

“In other words: Stress does not only make you feel anxious. It changes how your brain processes and prioritizes information.”

YOUR BODY'S BASIC NEEDS ALSO MATTER.

Sleep: Sleep loss consistently affects alertness, sustained attention, reaction time and working memory.

Hydration: Dehydration can interfere with attention, memory, reaction time and aspects of executive function.

Food: Food provides the energy and nutrients your brain needs to function. Regular meals and snacks support stable energy and better concentration.

WHEN YOUR SYSTEM BELIEVES THAT SOMETHING IS URGENT, CONCENTRATION ON ORDINARY RESPONSIBILITIES CAN BECOME SECONDARY.

This may appear as:

- Brain Fog:** You feel mentally cloudy, slowed down or unable to think clearly.
- Racing Thoughts:** Your mind moves quickly between worries, responsibilities, ideas and possible outcomes.
- Zoning Out:** Your attention disconnects from the present moment.
- Forgetfulness:** Information does not remain available long enough to be stored or recalled.
- Mental Fatigue:** Activities requiring concentration begin to feel physically exhausting.
- Decision Fatigue:** After making repeated choices throughout the day, your ability to carefully evaluate the next decision becomes weaker.
- Cognitive Overload:** Your brain receives more information or responsibility than it can effectively organize.

“Understanding why concentration changes is only half the battle. Many of us unknowingly make focusing even harder through the habits we repeat every day.”



WHEN YOUR BRAIN FEELS OVERLOADED

Practical Ways to Protect Your Focus

Most people do not suddenly lose their ability to concentrate. As stress accumulates and mental demands increase, your brain begins signaling that it is carrying more than it can comfortably process.

The good news is that small, intentional changes can help you respond with greater awareness, compassion, and focus.



SCHEDULE BRAIN BREAKS

Don't wait until you are mentally exhausted. Place short breaks on your calendar just as you would any important appointment. A few intentional minutes to breathe, stretch, or step away can help restore your attention.



KEEP FOOD & WATER NEARBY

Your brain needs fuel to function well. Choose snacks that are realistic for your schedule, and keep water where you can see it. Small habits like these help support sustained concentration throughout the day.



BREATHE BETWEEN TASKS

Before moving from one responsibility to the next, pause for three slow breaths. This simple transition gives your nervous system an opportunity to reset before asking your brain to focus again.



COMPLETE A BRAIN DUMP

Write down every unfinished thought, reminder, worry, or responsibility occupying your mind. You do not have to organize it immediately. The goal is simply to free your attention for what matters most right now.



CHOOSE YOUR TOP THREE

Instead of trying to accomplish everything, identify the three tasks that will make the greatest difference today. Completing a few meaningful priorities is often more productive than beginning many unfinished ones.



GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION TO RESET

A difficult morning does not have to become a difficult day. Pause. Eat something. Step outside. Rewrite your list if needed. Then begin again with compassion instead of criticism.

“

A GENTLE REMINDER

*Protecting your focus
begins with protecting
yourself.*

Your brain responds best when it receives rest, nourishment, healthy boundaries, and grace. Small, consistent actions create meaningful improvements in mental clarity and emotional well-being.



ATLANTA WELLNESS SPOTLIGHT

This month, we're highlighting events and experiences across Atlanta that support your mind, body, and overall well-being.

Get out, connect, and take care of you.



UPCOMING WELLNESS EVENTS IN ATLANTA



YOGA ON THE CHATTAHOOCHEE

Powers Island – Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area

Free outdoor yoga in a beautiful riverside setting. All levels welcome. Bring your mat and water!

SUNDAY

AUG

02

8:30 AM



SWAMI ON OVERCOMING LONELINESS

Liminal Space Collective

A spiritual talk series offering insight and inspiration for building meaningful connection and inner peace.

THURSDAY–
SUNDAY

JUL 30–
AUG 02

7:00 PM



WELLNESS WALK & TALK

Westside BeltLine Trail

Join a community walk focused on movement, meaningful conversations, and connection.

SUNDAY

AUG

09

9:00 AM



WELLNESS BOOK CLUB

A Cappella Books – Inman Park

A monthly book club exploring topics on mental health, self-care, and personal growth.

FRIDAY

AUG

14

7:00 PM



PLANT-POWERED COOKING CLASS

The Real Milk & Honey

Learn simple, nourishing recipes that fuel your body and support your wellness goals.

SUNDAY

AUG

23

11:00 AM



SELF-CARE SUNDAY

Historic Fourth Ward Park

A calming afternoon of journaling, breathwork, and self-care practices to prepare for the week ahead.

MONDAY

AUG

31

4:00 PM

WELLNESS FOCUS



CONNECT: Building relationships and community supports emotional well-being.



MOVE: Physical activity boosts mood, reduces stress, and improves focus.



NOURISH: Eating well and staying hydrated support both body and mind.

“

BEFORE YOU GO

Always check event websites for the latest details, ticket information, and any changes.

Your well-being is worth planning for.



THE SCIENCE BEHIND YOUR FOCUS

What Research Continues to Reveal About Attention, Stress, and Mental Clarity

Scientists have spent decades studying how the brain processes information, responds to stress, and maintains attention. While research continues to evolve, several key findings help explain why focusing can feel more difficult—and what supports a healthier, more resilient brain.

STUDY
ONE

2018

Stress Changes the Brain's Priorities

Research from Stanford University found that chronic stress alters how the prefrontal cortex functions, making it harder to sustain attention, regulate emotions, and make thoughtful decisions.

Source: Stanford Medicine, 2018

STUDY
TWO

2021

Sleep and Focus Are Deeply Connected

A large-scale study published in *Nature* and *Science of Sleep* showed that even one night of poor sleep significantly reduces next-day attention, memory, and problem-solving ability.

Source: Nature and Science of Sleep, 2021

STUDY
THREE

2023

Digital Overload Impacts Cognitive Control

Research from the University of Michigan found that constant digital interruptions reduce the brain's ability to filter distractions and increases mental fatigue.

Source: University of Michigan, 2023

STUDY
FOUR

2024

Nutrition Fuels Mental Performance

The journal *Nutrients* published findings that consistent hydration, balanced meals, and adequate omega-3 fatty acids support memory, concentration, and overall brain function.

Source: Nutrients Journal, 2024

STUDY
FIVE

2025

Mindfulness Strengthens Attention

A 2025 meta-analysis in *JAMA Network Open* found that mindfulness practices improve sustained attention, reduce stress reactivity, and support emotional regulation.

Source: JAMA Network Open, 2025

“

*Science reminds us that focus is not simply about discipline.
It is deeply connected to the health and protection of the brain.*

– ASSUAGE INSIGHT

WHAT MENTAL OVERLOAD LOOKS LIKE IN REAL LIFE

Concentration problems do not always look dramatic. They often appear in ordinary moments that leave you questioning your intelligence, effort or commitment.



AT WORK

You may:

- Read the same email three times before understanding it.
- Forget what someone explained only moments earlier.
- Switch repeatedly between emails, messages and assignments.
- Begin the day with a plan but become distracted by every new request.
- Spend significant time deciding which task to complete first.
- Make small errors because your mind is somewhere else.
- Feel constantly busy without completing your most important responsibility.

You may believe that working on several things simultaneously makes you more productive. In reality, frequent task-switching requires your brain to repeatedly disengage, reorient and remember where you left off. The result is often more mental fatigue and less meaningful progress.



AT HOME

You may:

- Walk into a room and forget why you went there.
- Start cleaning one area and become distracted by another.
- Leave cabinets, drawers or projects partially open.
- Misplace your keys, phone or wallet regularly.
- Forget food on the stove or laundry in the washing machine.
- Feel overwhelmed by clutter but unable to decide where to begin.
- Postpone basic responsibilities until they become urgent.

These patterns are not always caused by carelessness. Your working memory may already be occupied with bills, appointments, relationships, caregiving and unresolved worries.



IN RELATIONSHIPS

You may:

- Drift away mentally during conversations.
- Forget plans or commitments that genuinely mattered to you.
- Struggle to respond because you cannot organize your thoughts.
- Become irritated when someone asks another question.
- Appear emotionally unavailable when you are actually depleted.
- Listen for the purpose of responding rather than understanding.
- Need information repeated because you were preoccupied internally.

Your loved ones may interpret distraction as disinterest. Meanwhile, you may feel guilty because you care deeply but cannot remain mentally present.



WHILE PARENTING OR CAREGIVING

You may:

- Feel overstimulated by noise, touch and repeated requests.
- Struggle to complete tasks because you are constantly interrupted.
- Lose patience more quickly than usual.
- Forget small responsibilities even when you are trying your best.
- Feel guilty for wanting silence or time alone.
- Experience difficulty shifting from caregiver mode to another role.
- Remain mentally alert even when everyone else is resting.

Caregiving requires constant emotional, physical and cognitive attention. Your brain may be tracking meals, medications, safety, schedules, moods, supplies and future needs at the same time. Needing a break does not mean you are uncaring. It means your mental resources are finite.



AS A STUDENT

You may:

- Read several pages without retaining the information.
- Delay beginning an assignment because it feels too large.
- Spend more time preparing to study than studying.
- Become distracted by your phone every few minutes.
- Know the material but struggle to recall it during a test.
- Find it difficult to organize your ideas into writing.
- Feel mentally exhausted before completing your work.

Learning requires enough cognitive space to take in, organize and retrieve new information. When stress is already using that space, studying can feel much harder.



DURING GRIEF, ANXIETY OR DEPRESSION

You may:

- Replay difficult memories or conversations.
- Mentally prepare for situations that have not happened.
- Feel slowed down or disconnected.
- Lose interest in activities that previously energized you.
- Struggle to remember ordinary details.
- Feel unable to make even small decisions.
- Become overwhelmed by tasks that once felt manageable.

Emotional pain occupies cognitive space. Your mind may be using energy to understand what happened, anticipate what may happen next or protect you from experiencing additional pain.



ASK YOURSELF

Before saying, "I should be able to handle this," ask:
What else is my brain trying to handle at the same time?

Your difficulties may not reflect a lack of intelligence. They may reflect daily habits, emotional demands and environmental distractions that are quietly consuming your focus.

EVERYDAY HABITS STEALING YOUR FOCUS

Small habits can have a big impact on your ability to think clearly.

Many of these habits feel normal or even necessary, but they quietly drain your mental energy and make it harder to stay focused. The good news? Small changes can help you protect your attention.



HABITS THAT QUIETLY DRAIN YOUR FOCUS



NOTIFICATIONS

Every ping, buzz, or alert pulls your attention away from what you are doing and trains your brain to expect constant interruptions.



TRY THIS

Turn off non-essential notifications. Check messages at set times instead of responding to every alert.



MULTITASKING

Trying to do multiple things at once makes your brain switch back and forth, which lowers productivity and increases mental fatigue.



TRY THIS

Focus on one task at a time. Give it your full attention until it is complete or until it is time to take a break.



SKIPPING MEALS

Low blood sugar affects your concentration, memory, and mood. Your brain needs fuel to function at its best.



TRY THIS

Eat balanced meals and healthy snacks throughout the day. Keep water nearby and stay hydrated.



POOR SLEEP

Lack of quality sleep makes it harder to focus, solve problems, and manage stress. It also increases distractibility.



TRY THIS

Create a consistent bedtime routine. Aim for 7–8 hours of sleep and limit screen time before bed.



MENTAL CLUTTER

Unfinished tasks, worries, and too many commitments compete for your attention and leave your mind feeling crowded.



TRY THIS

Write it down. Get it out of your head and onto paper. Review, prioritize, and let go of what is not urgent.



EXCESSIVE SCREEN TIME

Too much time on devices overstimulates your brain, reduces attention span, and increases mental exhaustion.



TRY THIS

Set limits. Take screen breaks. Replace some screen time with activities that rest and restore your mind.

“

*Your focus is not just about willpower.
It is about creating a lifestyle that supports your brain.*

— ASSUAGE INSIGHT



EVERYDAY HABITS STEALING YOUR FOCUS *(Continued)*

Small habits can have a big impact on your ability to think clearly.

Many of these habits feel normal or even necessary, but they quietly drain your mental energy and make it harder to stay focused. The good news? Small changes can help you protect your attention.



❖ HABITS THAT QUIETLY DRAIN YOUR FOCUS (CONTINUED) ❖



CHECKING YOUR PHONE CONSTANTLY
Frequent phone checks break your concentration and train your brain to expect constant distractions.



TRY THIS
Set specific times to check your phone. Keep it out of arm's reach while you work or study.



OVER-PLANNING YOUR DAY
Packing your day too full creates stress and leaves no room for deep focus or unexpected delays.



TRY THIS
Plan your top 3 priorities each day. Build in buffer time between tasks and leave space to breathe.



SAYING "YES" TO EVERYTHING
Overcommitting spreads your mental energy too thin and leaves little focus for what truly matters.



TRY THIS
Protect your priorities. It's okay to say "no" or "not right now." Your time and attention are valuable.



BACKGROUND NOISE AND DISTRACTIONS
Noise, conversations, and cluttered environments make it harder for your brain to concentrate deeply.



TRY THIS
Create a quiet, calm space when you need to focus. Use noise-canceling headphones or soothing music if helpful.



RUNNING ON EMPTY
Ignoring rest, hydration, and self-care leaves your brain fatigued and less able to focus.



TRY THIS
Take short breaks, drink water, stretch, and rest. You can't pour from an empty cup.



LACK OF CLEAR PRIORITIES
When you are not clear on what matters most, your attention gets scattered across too many things.



TRY THIS
Start each day by asking, "What are my top 2–3 priorities?" Focus on those before moving anything else forward.



DAILY FOCUS RESET

- ✓ Review your priorities.
- ✓ Remove or postpone non-essentials.
- ✓ Create space for what matters most.
- ✓ Protect your focus like your peace depends on it.



Small changes, consistently applied, create powerful results. One habit at a time, one choice at a time.

– ASSUAGE INSIGHT



THERAPIST INSIGHT

*Focus is not just about willpower.
It is about protecting your mind
so you can live with more peace and purpose.*

Your brain was not designed to carry this much,
for this long, without rest and support. The good news
is that you can train your mind, build better habits,
and create more space for what truly matters.



PRACTICAL WAYS TO PROTECT YOUR FOCUS



PRIORITIZE REST

Quality sleep is essential for memory,
attention and emotional regulation.
Make rest a non-negotiable.



CLARIFY YOUR PRIORITIES

You do not have to do everything.
Focus on what matters most and learn
to release what does not.



FUEL YOUR BODY

Balanced meals and hydration support
brain function and steady energy
throughout the day.



TAKE MINI BREAKS

Short breaks improve concentration
and prevent burnout. Step away,
breathe and reset.



SET BOUNDARIES

Limit distractions and protect your
time and attention. It is okay to say
no and to unplug.



USE STRESS MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Deep breathing, prayer, journaling
or mindfulness can calm your mind
and restore clarity.



CLEAR MENTAL CLUTTER

Write it down, create a plan
or talk it through. Getting it out
of your head creates space.



SEEK SUPPORT

You do not have to figure it all out
alone. Therapy can help you develop
strategies that work for you.

REFLECTION PROMPTS

- 1 What habits are draining my focus the most right now?
- 2 What is one small change I can make this week to protect my attention?
- 3 How can I better care for my mind and body?
- 4 What boundaries do I need to set?
- 5 What support or resources can help me succeed?



A GENTLE REMINDER

*You are not lazy.
You are not broken.
You are carrying more than
you should have to carry alone.*

Give yourself grace. Take one step
at a time. Your mind deserves care,
just like your body does.





MONTHLY REFLECTION

Clear the Mental Clutter

Take a quiet moment to reconnect with yourself.
There are no right or wrong answers—only honest ones.

JOURNAL PROMPTS

- 1 What thoughts have occupied the most space in my mind this week?
- 2 Which concerns require action, and which concerns require acceptance?
- 3 What is currently within my control?
- 4 What am I mentally carrying that belongs to someone else?
- 5 What deserves less of my mental energy?
- 6 Which *unfinished responsibility* creates the most anxiety when I think about it?
- 7 What is one *responsibility I can* remove, delegate or postpone?
- 8 What does my *brain need* more of this month?
- 9 What does my *brain need less* of this month?
- 10 What would *protecting my focus* look like in my everyday life?

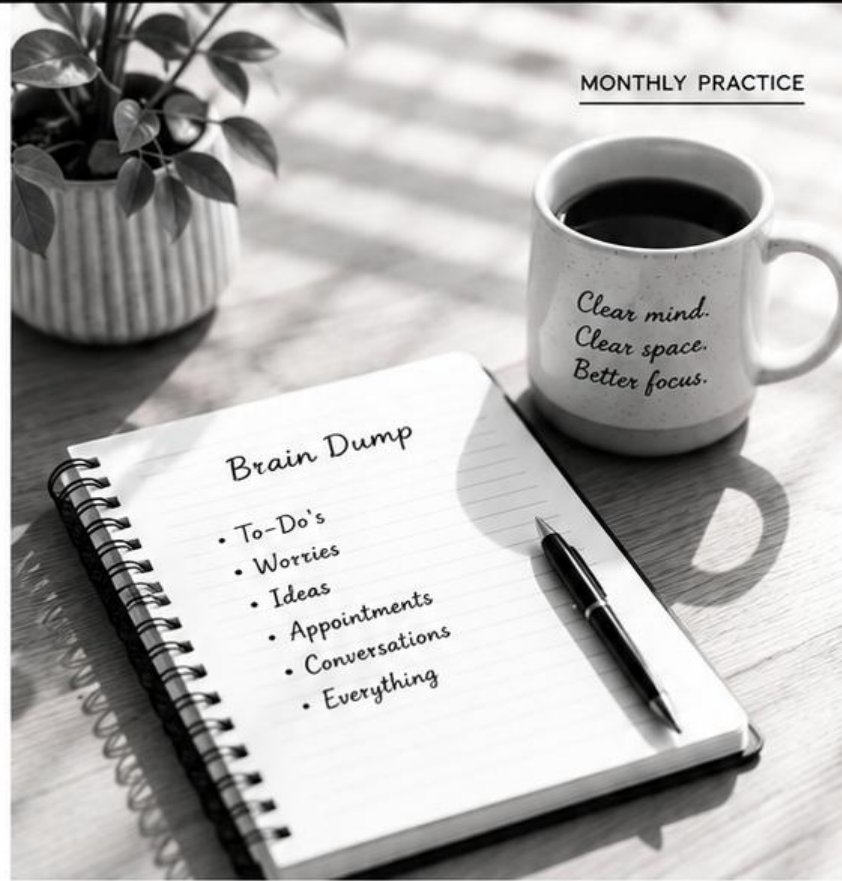
Today's Reflection

“ Awareness is where change begins. Before you can protect your focus, you must first notice what has been quietly competing for it.

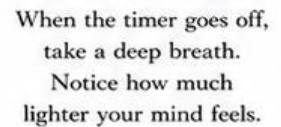
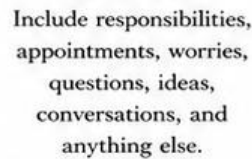
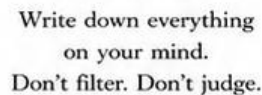
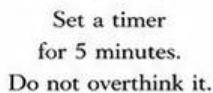
— ASSUAGE INSIGHT —



Give your mind five minutes
to get everything out.
Then, take a deep breath.
You'll feel the mental space
you didn't know you needed.



• HERE'S HOW TO DO IT •



DATE: _____

[illegible]

- What is on my to-do list?
- What is worrying me?
- What appointments or deadlines do I need to remember?
- What decisions do I need to make?
- What conversations or responses am I thinking about?
- What ideas or goals are on my mind?
- What am I not ready to let go of?
- What else is taking up mental space?



“ When you write it out, you gain perspective.
When you let it go, you gain peace.
Make this a daily habit.

“

YOUR AUGUST FOCUS PRACTICE

Small steps. Big change.

Use this 4-week focus practice to build habits that protect your attention and support your mental clarity.

Focus on one weekly intention at a time.
You don't have to be perfect.
You just have to be consistent.



• WEEKLY FOCUS PLAN •

WEEK 1

FOCUS ON _____



What is one thing
I will focus on
this week?

WHY THIS MATTERS TO ME: _____

ACTION STEP I WILL TAKE: _____

HOW I WILL PROTECT MY FOCUS: _____

WEEKLY REFLECTION: _____

WEEK 2

FOCUS ON _____



What is one thing
I will focus on
this week?

WHY THIS MATTERS TO ME: _____

ACTION STEP I WILL TAKE: _____

HOW I WILL PROTECT MY FOCUS: _____

WEEKLY REFLECTION: _____



“ You don't need more willpower.
You need better systems that support your mind. ”



YOUR AUGUST FOCUS PRACTICE

Weeks 3 & 4: Strengthening Your Focus

You've built awareness and started new habits. Now, you're strengthening those habits so they become part of your everyday life.



WEEK 3

RESTORE

Give Your Brain Time to Reset

By now, you may notice what drains your focus the most. This week is about restoring your mental energy on purpose.

THIS WEEK, I WILL:

- Schedule at least one short rest break each day.
- Do one activity that helps me relax and recharge.
- Prioritize 7-8 hours of sleep each night.
- Say "no" to something that would overextend me.



REMEMBER:

Rest is not a reward for being productive.
It is a requirement for staying well.



WEEK 4

PROTECT

Guard Your Focus Daily

Building focus is one thing. Protecting it is what makes it last.

THIS WEEK, I WILL:

- Limit distractions by setting boundaries with my time and attention.
- Create a calm environment for deep focus.
- Use the "single-task" method for important tasks.
- End each day by celebrating one small win.



REMEMBER:

You cannot control everything.
But you can protect your focus.



MY WEEK 3 & 4 COMMITMENT

I am choosing to restore my energy
and protect my focus so I can live
with more clarity, peace and purpose.

Signature: _____ Date: _____



AFFIRMATION

I am becoming more focused,
more peaceful and more
intentional every day.
I am proud of my progress.

*Small actions today create
powerful changes tomorrow.*



As You Move Through August...

*I choose
peace over pressure,
clarity over confusion,
and presence over distraction.*

I protect my focus because my mental health matters.

I release what no longer serves me.

I make space for what brings me peace.

I give myself permission to rest.

I trust the process of creating a healthier,
more balanced life.



*Today, I choose to be present,
to think clearly, and to live with intention.*

Charlisa Watson, LCSW

FOUNDER & THERAPIST
ASSUAGE THERAPEUTIC COACHING, LLC

Thank you for spending part of your journey with us this month.

We'll see you in September.



FOUNDER'S MESSAGE

There is a difference between being distracted and being mentally overloaded.

Many people criticize themselves because they can't seem to focus the way they used to. They begin questioning their intelligence, motivation, or discipline when, in reality, their brain has simply been carrying more than it was ever designed to hold.

Every responsibility, every worry, every unanswered question, every unfinished task competes for your attention. Eventually, your mind begins to feel crowded, and concentration becomes increasingly difficult. That doesn't mean you're incapable—it means your brain is asking for support.

One of the most valuable habits you can develop is learning to recognize your vulnerabilities before they begin affecting your day. A poor night's sleep, skipping meals, carrying unresolved stress, or ignoring your need for rest all have a cumulative effect on your ability to think clearly. Paying attention to those warning signs isn't weakness; it's wisdom.

Protecting your focus requires intention. Build moments throughout your day that allow your mind to recover. Step away from the screen. Take a few slow, intentional breaths. Nourish your body. Write your thoughts down instead of asking your brain to carry them all. Give yourself permission to pause before pushing forward.

Remember, productivity isn't about doing more—it's about thinking more clearly. When you learn to protect your mental energy, your decisions improve, your confidence grows, and your life begins to feel more manageable.

Your mind deserves the same care and attention you give every other important part of your life. Protect it well.

With gratitude,
Charlisa Watson, LCSW
Founder & Clinical Director
Assuage Therapeutic Coaching LLC

 assuagetc.com

  [@assuagetherapeutic](https://www.instagram.com/assuagetherapeutic)

Your mental wellness matters. We're here to support you—one choice, one breath, one day at a time.

