

# STOLEN FOCUS

by Johann Hari

Distracted much???



## WHY CAN'T YOU CONCENTRATE?

Stolen Focus explains why it's becoming so much harder for everyone to pay attention.



### YOU'RE EXHAUSTED

Sleep seems to be a dwindling commodity these days, and exhaustion is rife. Long work hours, screens, and medication seem to be destroying our ability to rest. Workers pride themselves on working hours. Blue lights from screens disrupt your natural sleep cycles. Sleeping pills and medications do not provide the same quality of rest as natural sleep cycles. Put all these together, and you have an exhausted population that has trouble completing tasks.



### TECHNOLOGY HAS CONTROL

'Surveillance capitalism' happens when social media platforms monitor your activity online and manipulate the advertising you receive to match. The purpose is to get you to buy more and keep your eyes on the screen longer. Not only do these algorithms monitor what you shop for, they trace what holds your attention longest and deliberately feed you similar content. This leads to social media becoming more and more addictive. Even worse... human nature tends to linger longer over negative content.



### ALL THAT STRESS

Stress is a huge contributor to the focus crisis. Being in perpetual stress raises a chemical in your brain called cortisol. Cortisol then tells your brain to be alert and vigilant at all times. In deep history, this mechanism was to keep human ancestors alert for possible predators. These days though, it has people on the lookout for 'tigers' that aren't there. There are things to be done to reduce your stress levels but you need to look to the source of your stress and find ways to eradicate it.



"If you see the world through fragments, your empathy often doesn't kick in, in the way that it does when you engage with something in a sustained, focused way."

## THREE STEPS TO RECLAIM FOCUS:

1

### RECOGNISE SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM

Surveillance capitalism is deliberately and maliciously stealing your focus. As long as it continues to thrive, people will struggle to concentrate. On an individual level, maintain awareness of surveillance capitalism and don't let it control how you think.

2

### DRAW BOUNDARIES AROUND YOUR WORKING WEEK

The ever-expanding workweek strips people of the ability to find time for themselves and their families. Worse, email and mobile phones mean many workers are expected to be on call at all times. Find time in your life outside of work and stop glorifying the idea of overworking.

3

### LET THE CHILDREN PLAY

Children are being robbed of their ability to play and socialise. Playtime has always been crucial to childhood development. Children imprisoned in homes and classrooms have no chance to develop the ability to pay attention. Allow free play so children can discover what they are passionate about and develop vital social skills with their peers.

"NOT EVERYTHING THAT IS FACED  
CAN BE CHANGED, BUT NOTHING CAN  
BE CHANGED UNTIL IT IS FACED."

