

THE JORDAN HARBINGER SHOW

Worksheet for Nir Eyal | How to Manage Distraction in a Digital Age (Episode 48)

In a world of such abundance, it can be hard to focus. Our lives seems to be getting busier and busier, and social media allows us to engage with ever-increasing amounts of information. Couple that with the fact that we find variable rewards and uncertainty engaging and entertaining, we have a recipe for distraction, or worse.

While it can be easy to blame advertisers or social media for trying to obtain, maintain, and manipulate our attention, Nir Eyal, author of [*Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products*](#) and the upcoming *Indistractable*, asserts that we should be taking ownership and focusing on “acts of traction” instead of distraction. Nir joins us for [episode 48](#) to share how we can take some of the power back and focus on what we want.

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Trigger Warning

Nir discusses how we tend to conflate the email chime, the text message, or the smartphone notification with the actual distraction, when they're really just triggers. Being distracted is an active state within our control. He distinguishes between external and internal triggers and says that the vast majority of distractions are actually internally triggered because we're wired to want to satiate uncomfortable physical or emotional sensations.

Identify your internal triggers. Begin keeping a log of how you're feeling when you're distracted or unfocused. Are you bored? Angry? Lonely? Tired? Start an inventory of these scenarios and see what patterns you find.

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Surf's Up

Instead of ignoring triggers, or trying not to feel what we're feeling, Nir says that we should be curious about the sensations we feel and explore them. He uses an example of conflating the feeling of being hungry with the fear of becoming hungry to demonstrate a concept he calls "surfing the urge." To explore his urges, he uses a 10-minute rule:

The next time you get an urge, try the following: require yourself to be curious about the sensation for 10 minutes. Fully indulge in the idea, but take no action until the 10 minutes are up. Did you find that the urge was something you actually had to satiate, or did your exploration cause you to realize that the sensation was being triggered by something else? Or did the urge pass entirely? Try this exercise with both physical and emotional sensations. Remember to jot down your observations.

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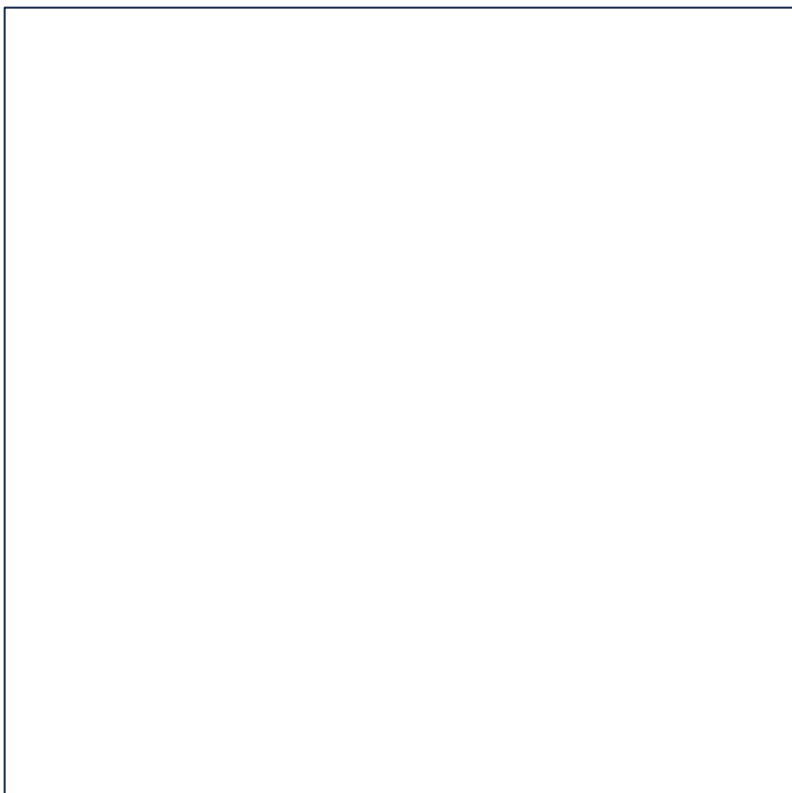
Noble Obstacles?

How do you know the difference between traction and distraction? Jordan jokes that he's really productive in other areas when he's trying to avoid doing something for which he's unmotivated. Nir argues that, even though Jordan was productive, he was still distracted, and he shares a black and white way of telling the difference. It's not the action itself that's good or bad; all that matters is whether or not it was what we intended to do. If we don't plan and decide what we want, someone or something else will.

Start planning your day. Every day. Try to plan your days for at least the next couple of weeks to give yourself enough time to begin to develop the habit and see it pay some dividends. If possible, try to plan your day the evening before. Don't think of this as scheduling or filling every minute of your time. Instead, think of your goals, and block out chunks of time in which to focus. Remember to plan your entire day, even your blocks of down time. Focus on at least these three areas:

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- 1) **Time just for you.**
- 2) **Time for others, such as family, friends, or community groups.**
- 3) **Work life (but not until you schedule the first two). If you find yourself struggling to plan your time effectively for work, check out Nir's description of how the UCSF nurses were able to improve focus and succumb to less distraction.**



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Notification Cessation

Some of the simplest fixes are the most easily overlooked. Here's a simple exercise to cut down on our distractions that we seem to forget about: ***Take the time to configure your notification settings on your smartphone. For even more control, consider setting a do not disturb schedule, too.*** Nir says that two thirds of smartphone owners never bother to set up their notifications!

Full show notes and resources for this episode [can be found here.](#)

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About



Join Jordan Harbinger (critically acclaimed host, formerly of The Art of Charm) as we get deep into the untapped wisdom of the world's top performers -- from legendary musicians to intelligence operatives, iconoclastic writers to visionary change-makers.

We deconstruct the playbooks of the most successful people on earth -- and learn new strategies, perspectives, and insights you can't find anywhere else. Then, take these insights into your own life and live what you listen.

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