

Constant Task Switching

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I know I'm losing focus when I'm constantly jumping around from task to task.

This is a "red flag" for me — a sign that I'm doing something wrong. You've done it too: switching from one browser tab to another, opening various emails and other messages, checking on this and that. No focus, lots of stress, lots of mental exhaustion without really getting anything done.

It means that I've lost myself in a chain of endless distraction, and am not truly conscious of what I'm doing.

When this red flag shows itself, I have a few simple solutions:

1. **Assess what's important.** What should I really be working on right now? I know it's not the million little things. It's something big that I'm probably avoiding. Often this means taking a step back to re-examine my priorities.
2. **Simplify.** Constant switching often means I'm overloaded. I've taken on too much. I need to let go of the idea that I'm going to get everything done, and just focus on what I can really get done today. That might mean emailing or calling people to tell them I can't do something today (or this week). I let go of tasks or projects, decide they're not important and cross them off my list or put them on a "later" list that I'll look at next week. Simplifying helps me to find focus again.
3. **Clear everything.** If I have a task to focus on, I like to clear all tabs or close the browser and anything else that I don't need to be doing right now. And just have the one task in front of me. This makes a huge difference. When you limit your options, you really get good at sticking to what's there.
4. **Stay with the moment.** Often we get lost in rushing around between tasks. When I clear everything away, I try to stay with this task, and do my best to be mindful of my urges to go check on something or switch away to something more comfortable but less important. I am mindful of my thoughts, of my body responses to what I'm doing. This focus, then, becomes a mindfulness exercise.

The practice of simplifying, clearing things away and staying with what I'm doing is incredibly useful, and something I haven't mastered yet.

In my experience, it's a process of letting go, and accepting.

Letting go of all the little urges to be up-to-date, to be in-the-know, to do everything, to say yes to everything.

And accepting this present moment as it is, and staying with it.

This letting go and accepting, by the way, is the secret to happiness and peace. It's worth practicing.
