

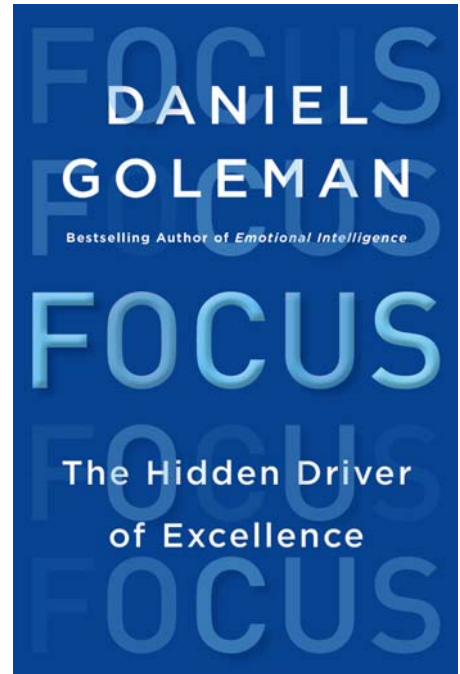
FOCUS

The Hidden Driver of Excellence

by Daniel Goleman



- **Attention/Focus works like a muscle.** Use it poorly, and it can wither; work it well and it grows.
- **Focus comes in three varieties** and a well-lived life demands that we be nimble at each:
 - Inner (self-management)
 - Other (empathy for others; relationships)
 - Outer (awareness of broad patterns and complex systems).
- **Top performers—whether in education, business, sports, or the arts—use “smart practice” to increase their focus.**
 - It is not the sheer number of hours they put in—the so-called 10,000 hour rule—but the way they pay attention to their performance, rapidly absorbing highly specific feedback and engaging with coaches to correct errors and add new learning on a routine basis. (i.e., channel surfing while running on a treadmill won’t get you to the Olympics.)
- It’s not the chatter of people around us that is **the most powerful distractor**, but rather the **chatter of our own minds**.
- **Too much focus on yourself - can be a bad thing.** Consider the star golfer who overthinks his swing. But intentional, full focus is essential when we’re learning new things.
- **Our mind wanders half the time, but it’s not always a bad thing.** The positive functions of mind wandering are generating scenarios for the future, self-reflection, incubation of creative ideas, and organizing memories. This kind of “open awareness” creates a mental platform for creative breakthroughs and unexpected insights.
- **The antidote to attention fatigue** is the same as for the physical kind: **take a rest**. This doesn’t mean surfing the web or playing a violent video game, but rather finding a totally different immersive activity to engage in, such as taking a walk in nature or connecting with a trusted friend.
- **“Other” focus** entails empathy in three flavors:
 - Cognitive empathy (I understand how you see things)
 - Emotional empathy (I feel with you)
 - Empathic concern (I want to help)
- **The common cold of leadership is poor listening.** Successful leaders develop “triple focus” skills by paying attention to “inner, outer, and other.”



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