

Laser Focus

Improve Your Concentration
Achieve More in Less Time

Action Sheet

About Charlene Burke



Charlene Burke is an Information Professional who does research and writes content from that research, with a background in marketing and engineering.

She is a Mastermind Group Expert and Productivity/Accountability Expert. She hosts her own Mastermind Groups and Get It Done Productivity Groups, and offers her professional facilitation services to coaches, consultants, and trainers who want to add a peer discussion/study group to their programs. She founded Search by Burke to provide businesses with

- research based content that showcases their authority and credibility
- assistance with understanding the data about their customers
- training on how to get more done by improving their productivity

Beginning in the early '80s, Charlene learned and practiced mindfulness and cognitive behavior therapy to change her thinking, rid herself of extreme stress, and heal her body through meditation and eating food as medicine.

She has volunteered her time and shared her experience with women who have been living on the streets and want to re-enter society, teaching them Life skills and essential stress management and thought management skills based on mindfulness. Today, many women attribute their ability to get jobs, get custody of their children, and their many successes in careers to Charlene's willingness to teach them these skills.

It is this combination of mindfulness, business knowledge, and technical expertise that makes her clients say that she is their "secret weapon". Individual clients range from business consultants to organizational leadership coaches, from manufacturing product managers to sales managers. Group members include coaches, consultants, owners, sales representatives, and internet marketers.

Charlene is passionate about making sure people have clarity and understanding with regard to their personal and business through asking the right questions, getting the answers and understanding the answers to their questions, and that they understand *how to use those answers* to grow personally and professionally.

Charlene's words of wisdom:

"I believe that Knowledge is Power. Everyone can and should improve themselves by growing their heart, their mind, and their business. Regardless of what stage in life they're in. Whether it's to develop a better mindset, improve their relationship with a higher power/creator or to increase profits, moving forward is key."

If you would like to learn more from Charlene Burke please visit:

Website: [Search by Burke](#)

Facebook Group: [Productivity Secrets of Women Entrepreneurs](#)

Laser Focus – Action Sheet

Introduction – Focus and Concentration

- ✓ The average attention span is approximately 8.25 seconds or less
- ✓ The attention span is shrinking
- ✓ “Busy” is considered good, but can really be negative
- ✓ Technology is distracting and can keep you from dealing with other things
- ✓ Studies suggest that technology can affect the brain negatively
- ✓ There is evidence to suggest that shorter attentions spans allow us to multi-task and make us smarter
- ✓ We are bombarded with distraction
- ✓ This course will help you identify and control your distractions

Action Steps:

1. What are you easily distracted by- email, social media, surfing the web, games etc.? Brainstorm and write down a few of the key distractors that spring to mind.
2. While you are working, take a one-hour time block and write down the number of times you are distracted and what distracted you. Use the provided worksheet or your own notebook. (Don't write "Writing down my distractions distracted me!")

Where is the Noise Coming From?

Key Takeaway:

- ✓ You'll need to make a deep analysis to find out what your distractions really are
- ✓ They're not always technology

- ✓ Distractions, or 'noise', can be split into two broad categories
- ✓ External Interference = noise from outside and can be...
 - Distractions
 - Irrelevant noise
 - Should be ignored
 - Interruptions
 - Working on a primary goal but engaging in a secondary goal
 - Something that disrupts, or multi-tasking
- ✓ Internal Interference = noise from within and can be...
 - Intrusions
 - Unwanted or distracting thought enter your head
 - Wandering mind
 - Diversions
 - Mental engagement in two things at the same time
- ✓ Workplace distractions can hurt productivity significantly
- ✓ Distractions include:
 - External
 - Work
 - Internal
 - Personal
- ✓ Not all distractions are technological
- ✓ It's impossible to keep all distraction from affecting you
- ✓ You can identify and control the worst

Action Steps:

1. List common distractions that affect you on a daily basis. Which ones are the most problematic for you? Which ones would you like to learn to control?

Tips and Techniques to Improve Your Focus at Work

Key Takeaway:

- ✓ Making improvements in concentration is simple as learning and mastering new techniques
- ✓ Some of these techniques you may already know, but don't implement
- ✓ Choose the techniques that are most feasible and effective for you

- ✓ Tips to boost brain power
 - Exercise
 - Regular exercise improves focus and concentration
 - Guidelines suggest three times a week
 - More frequent, more moderate exercise can have an even more pronounced effect
 - Don't strain yourself
 - Go unplugged
 - Regain focus by disconnecting for a set period each day
 - Engage in something that isn't tech-related
 - Get in touch with nature
 - Spend some time in solitude surrounded by nature
 - You'll feel the benefits of disconnection and your senses heightened
 - Take breaks
 - Take a break at least once per hour
 - Stand up and move around

- Take short breaks before you feel tired
- Caffeine intake
 - Most of us overdo the caffeine
 - It can sap energy and destroy focus
 - Use it in moderation
 - Limit intake to one or two cups per day
 - Also be aware of sugar content
- Drink water
 - Fluids help maintain your energy level
 - Dehydration leads to reduced focus
 - Drink filtered or bottled water or add ice or fruit
- Sleep well
 - Not enough sleep can kill focus and make you irritable
 - Many of us end up in a vicious cycle of too little sleep, too much caffeine and not enough exercise
 - Doctors recommend 8 hours of sleep a day, but it depends on the individual
 - Some sleep disorders may mean you don't sleep deeply enough
- Morning routine
 - Establishing a set morning routine is a good way to prepare each day
 - Some things to think about include:
 - Do nothing for an hour after waking up
 - Start the day with exercise or meditation
 - Start each day with something fun
 - Don't check electronic communication first thing
 - Be lazy on non-work days
 - Add organizing tasks to your morning routine
 - Try and wake up earlier for more time for your routine
 - Try and do something to set the tone of your day
- Eating well
 - Your brain needs calories to function
 - Always eat a good breakfast
 - Balance convenience with healthy eating choices
 - Snack throughout the day
 - Eat a light, healthy snack when you're tired or losing focus

- ✓ Getting organized for better focus and control
 - Clean your workspace
 - A clean workspace has a beneficial effect on your mind
 - Schedule a 'big clean' every week or so
 - Keep your home organized
 - It's also important to tackle clutter in your home
 - Systems exist to help you do this
 - Marie Kondo method – 'The life-changing magic of tidying up'
 - Get organized
 - Organize tools, files and folders
 - It should take minimum time to find things
 - Get rid of any clutter
 - Create an efficient filing system
 - Designate 'zones' for different types of work
 - Put most-used things within easy reach
 - Prioritize regular daily tasks
 - Destroy distractions
 - Establish rules and habits to more easily deal with distractions
 - Close multiple PC windows
 - Close email and designate certain times to check
 - Turn off social media/other notifications
 - Set aside a specific time each day to check social media
 - Turn off your phone
 - Separate yourself from everything else going on in your workplace
 - Wear noise-blocking headphones
 - Learn to say no to tough requests
 - Time management tips and methods
 - Use one calendar
 - Using one calendar for work and personal tasks avoids confusion
 - Color-code your calendar
 - Assign different types of tasks different colors to easily understand your schedule
 - Time-box

- Create boxes of time for different tasks
- Vary time lengths according to focus requires
- Break up tasks over several days
- The Pomodoro technique
 - Break up tasks into 25 minute boxes then taking a break of 3-5 minutes after each one
- Over estimate
 - Add extra time in estimations to allow for distractions or problems
- Set deadlines for everything
 - Deadlines will keep you from putting off non-urgent tasks
 - Also helps to prioritize tasks
- Prioritize and schedule high priority items first
 - Make a list of things to do based on deadlines
 - Do this daily, weekly, monthly and so on
- Work with your cycles
 - Figure out when your optimal focus times are and schedule tasks accordingly
- Single-task
 - Stick to one thing at a time to allow for optimal focus and attention
- Schedule distractions, communications and entertainment
 - Set aside time for distractions
 - It makes it easier to ignore them when you know you'll deal with them later on
- Work and non-work time
 - Create a definite time when work is finished each day
 - This is important for maintaining the right work-life balance
- Conduct a time audit
 - Monitor and log how you spend your time each day
 - After a while, see where your time is going
 - Decide where you need to adjust
 - Apps and software help with time tracking
 - Log personal as well as professional time

Action Steps:

1. List some techniques that you are currently using that you feel are effective from the various categories we covered in this module.
2. List some areas where you would like to improve your focus and concentration from among the various categories we covered in this module. Pick the tactics you will use.

Exercises to Improve Your Focus and Concentration

Key Takeaway:

- ✓ There are exercises you can perform daily to help improve focus
 - ✓ You only need to spend 5-10 minutes on these each day
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- ✓ Mindful meditation
 - Sharpen focus by heightening awareness of your internal thoughts and external environment
 - Sit somewhere comfortable and remain quiet with your eyes closed
 - Breathe deeply
 - Focus on sensations
 - Acknowledge thoughts then let them pass
 - Don't let a thought take you out of your environment
 - Start with 5 minutes and gradually expand to reach 20 or 30
 - ✓ Noting distractions
 - Note down distractions in a journal or set of cards
 - Separate into different times of the day
 - Write down your distractions or interruptions in the appropriate area
 - Note how you felt about it and what you did

- Recognize distractions and how you deal with them
- Go back and see where distractions are coming from
- ✓ Mantra techniques
 - Focus your attention on a set phrase
 - Repetition allows the meditator to enter an altered state of consciousness
 - Traditionally, mantras had religious significance
 - Now a way to focus your attention
 - Also helps to regulate breathing
- ✓ Deep breathing
 - An easy form of meditation
 - Take deep but natural breaths
 - Focus only on the breaths
 - Take a long, slow breath through your nose and let your stomach push it back out
 - Brings more oxygen into your brain
 - Great idea for a quick break
- ✓ Visualization
 - Also known as 'daydreaming'
 - Requires something to focus on
 - Place
 - Activity
 - Event
 - Desired result
 - Object or person
 - Use all five senses and imagine in as much detail as possible
- ✓ Ambient sound meditation
 - Sit somewhere and focus your attention on the sounds around you
 - Close your eyes and listen
 - Try to separate each sound from its cause
 - Listen to how the sounds interact
- ✓ Music for focus
 - Certain music can help with focus
 - Instrumental with no words
 - Ambient
 - Find music on your own or use a service like Focus@Will
 - Try ambient music by Brian Eno

- ✓ Memorize Something
 - Take a list of things and remember it in order
 - Keep adding items to make it longer
 - Requires attention and helps with memory
- ✓ Don't move
 - Sit somewhere comfortable and see how long you can go without moving
 - This takes a great deal of concentration
 - Start with five minutes and gradually extend the time
- ✓ Count backwards
 - Start with 100 and count back
 - For more of a challenge, use multiples or start at higher numbers
 - Try the alphabet backwards too
- ✓ Fix your gaze
 - Focus on something and keep it there for as long as possible
 - Outstretch your hand and gaze at your fingers
 - Hold something in your hand
 - Set a goal of five minutes and gradually increase
- ✓ Switch hands
 - Use your less dominant hand for regular tasks
 - Challenge your brain into doing something new
- ✓ Do puzzles
 - A great way to challenge your brain and sharpen concentration
- ✓ Mindful work
 - Take something that normally takes little concentration and pay attention to everything you do
- ✓ Learn a language
 - This can help boost focus, improve memory and give your brain a challenge
 - You don't have to be serious about study, just create time to focus each day
- ✓ These exercises should be done regularly
- ✓ Set aside time each day
- ✓ Use them as breaks to refresh and recharge focus

Action Steps:

1. Choose one or more concentration activities and practice daily for 5-10 minutes. Note how they affect your focus – positively or negatively.

Create Your Focus and Concentration Action Plan

Key Takeaway:

- ✓ You need to put everything together and create an action plan
 - ✓ Review the tips in the chapter 'Tips and Techniques to Improve Focus at work'
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- ✓ Go over the learning activity from the last module and look at the exercises you've chosen to try
 - ✓ Answer the questions on health and nutrition
 - Based on your responses, create a daily schedule
 - Make copies of your answers and use them as reminders
 - ✓ Organization
 - Pick a day to organize your workspace
 - Set daily, weekly and monthly times for tidying
 - Chose a method to declutter your house and set dates
 - Go through techniques to reduce distractions and create a plan to incorporate them
 - ✓ Time management
 - Integrate calendars into one
 - Front-load your schedule
 - Consider time-boxing
 - Break large projects into smaller goals
 - Make sure that you're single-tasking
 - Try the Pomodoro technique
 - Consider performing a time audit

- ✓ Mindfulness
 - Add a daily mindfulness activity to your calendar
 - Gradually increase time dedicated to this

Conclusion and Next Steps

Key Takeaway:

- ✓ Sustaining focus is harder than ever
- ✓ It's a matter of learning techniques to understand and avoid distractions

- ✓ You've learned:
 - The importance of striving to maintain focus
 - Different types of distractions
 - Which distractions cause particular problems
 - Tips and techniques to deal with distractions
 - Organization skills to stay on top of things
 - Basic time management techniques
 - Exercises to improve focus
 - How to create a plan to put it all together
- ✓ Now, review your notes and worksheets to put your plan into action.

Action Steps:

1. Review all your notes, worksheets, and checklists from the course.
2. Next, review your action plan; schedule any outstanding activities; and implement your plan. Review and reflect at regular intervals how your plan has led to improved focus and concentration.

Resources

Tools, services, products you may find helpful in your quest to get focused, stay focused, and finish your projects:

Todoist

<https://todoist.com>

A To Do List that integrates with your Google calendar easily. A bit more robust than a simple task list, can be used to organize projects and simple lists.

Trello

<https://searchbyburke.com/trello>

A Trello board is a list of lists, filled with cards, used by you and your team. It's a lot more than that, though. Trello has everything you need to organize projects of any size.

Remember the Milk

<https://www.rememberthemilk.com/>

Easy to use interface, create to-do lists, sync across multiple devices. *Remember the Milk* has a free option with a paid upgrade and excellent customer service. The basic free option will work for most users but upgrading is always an option.

Wunderlist

<https://www.wunderlist.com/>

Easy to use interface, create to-do lists, sync across multiple devices. *Wunderlist* has a free trial and then a monthly fee. If you need the extra integration, this may be worth it, otherwise give *Remember the Milk* a try first.

Get It Done Groups

<https://searchbyburke.com/get-it-done-group>

A monthly group program designed to help you finish a project. Meeting 2x/week, virtual work sessions, online tools, and opportunities to learn about resources that will help you finish the project.

1:1 Accountability Program

<https://bookme.name/CharleneBurke/lite/11-accountability-program>

You, me, virtual meeting room, figure out what needs to get done and when so you can finish the project, the tasks, or you simply need a weekly check-in buddy. Month-to-month so if you finish in one month – Wahoo! If you need more time, not a problem. Let's chat.

Productivity Secrets for Women Entrepreneurs

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ProductivitySecretsWomenEntrepreneurs/>

A Facebook group for women in business, women business owners, women entrepreneurs who want to be more productive, make more money, build a bigger business.

Meet Me For Something Else

<https://bookme.name/charleneburke>

My booking page with information about the different ways we can work together or just chat to get to know one another.