



Award winning trainer,

life coach, training designer, author & speaker,

YvonneB works with Gen X women, corporates in the health & wellbeing industry and sports charities,

inspiring confidence, unlocking potential

through personal development and the development of entrepreneurial skills



How I Got My Focus On...

12 years ago, after being made redundant, I made the decision to go into business. It has been the most challenging, scary and out of the comfort zone things I've ever done, yet more rewarding than I can express.

What I have learned about life, people and me has developed my skills and knowledge exponentially. Today I truly believe that all things are possible.

Of all of the many skills I have developed the one that jumps out is 'Focus'. Because no matter which one of my businesses I refer to, which accomplishment I think of, focus has been the constant skill to get me the results I wanted. Every single time.

When I look at the dictionary meaning of focus 'the centre of interest or activity' it really doesn't light me up. Yet what I have come to understand is this; by centring my attention on what I desire, the activities required to achieve it become doable. Each task that is aligned with my bigger goal equals one more stepping stone towards achieving my dream. And the focus I put into each task ensures it is completed to the best of my ability.

To me, focus is the ability to eliminate everything that isn't essential in order to do what needs to be done. Focus helps me to maximize my creative flow; that ability to tune in with a piece of work and lose all sense of time is an incredible feeling, and usually very rewarding.

We live in a time where there are distractions at every turn. If it's not emails pinging into the email inbox every few minutes, the mobile is ringing or social media messages are firing up the PC screen. And the thing is a few minutes of distraction might not seem like a big



deal but in actual fact, leaving a focused state to answer an email, for example, impacts me negatively because I then have to mentally attempt to get back in the flow and that takes time and time is the precious gift you never get back.

Once I got my head around this (and it has taken me years of, trial & error!) I decided to set some hard and fast rules around my working day. For instance, when I am working from home, my mobile is on silent, my emails are checked 3 times per day (first thing, post lunch time and late afternoon) with no pop up notices and I automate my social media or visit my pages when I am having a break.

What this means is that I can jump into my work, allow the cogs to start turning and, within a short period of time, be fully immersed, stopping only for short breaks (10-15 minutes every 90-120 minutes) during the course of the day (and to be honest, I often miss a few of those).

It took an awful lot of discipline to focus in on one thing (not multi-tasking) but it's fast becoming a habit that garners great returns. My clients know the best times to contact me and the best methods. I am a stickler about not taking personal calls during my working day and I manage my emails at the allocated times.

The real benefits of being focused are:

- I gain more time by being more productive allowing me to get to the gym or go for a run pretty much every day (no excuses) and I even get to relax in the evening instead of playing catch up with work on the PC
- I complete most projects ahead of their deadlines
- My energy levels remain high as I balance focused time with short energy breaks
- I feel accomplished at the end of the week; there's nothing more satisfying than ticking off everything on the 'to do' list and even adding some other things I hadn't planned to do but now had time to

Whether you work for yourself, are an employee or look after your household, getting focused can help you maximise your time and here are my 6 top tips:

- 1. Get clear on what you want to achieve and why** – once you know this you can measure your motivation to do what is needed. Your 'why' will be the motivator. On a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 is not even slightly motivated and 10 is through the roof, pinpoint where your motivation level is. If it is less than 8 you might struggle to get that laser like focus you need to get the work done now. So think about what it would take to make it a 9 or 10; visualize your why and get to it!
- 2. Plan** - Don't hope your day will map out, map it out but also be flexible. Plan your breaks as well as your chunked down focus times and leave some flexi time in your day for the unexpected or if something takes longer than you had expected. Plan with a sense of excitement. Not every task will be 'your favourite thing to do' but link each of them back into your why and you'll find the momentum to get things done (and if not, delegate it!) Plan in your down time too. This will help you to stay focused in the chunks of time you have set aside for work knowing you also have time set aside for the other things that are important to you (time with family, activities, socialising, etc)
- 3. Commit** – make a decision to work smartly. Decide to get more done in less time; that is what being productive is about, that is the essence of time management.
- 4. Work with your attention span** - Getting into the habit of working to small blocks of time with mini breaks can make all the difference. We are not good at working for hours on end (generally speaking). We lose intensity and focus. Better to do those short sharp blocks, re-energising your body and your mind in the mini breaks.

5. Maximise your energy peaks – If the morning is your peak output time, the time when you can get the most done, plan to do your most important /demanding task at that time. Putting that energy into your focus can yield amazing results!

6. Let your network know when you are available... or not! Very few people like to offend loved ones, clients or business associates however, it is up to you to put boundaries in place to safeguard your time. Let people know when you will be off the grid/unavailable and stick to it. If you give the time away, you will not be able to get it back and if you get caught up in answering endless calls, focus will become more and more difficult to get back. Be honest with yourself and with others.

7. Focused 'You' time – Find some time in your day to focus on you, whether that's taking a walk, going for a jog, sitting in the park or doing some yoga, or as I like to do, some personal development; get in touch with you. Listen to your internal chatter without judgement (mindfulness) and be self-aware (emotional intelligence). It's not all about work but this will help you experience the power of being focused and then you can apply it to any area of your life you desire!

YvonneB

www.yvonnebltd.com