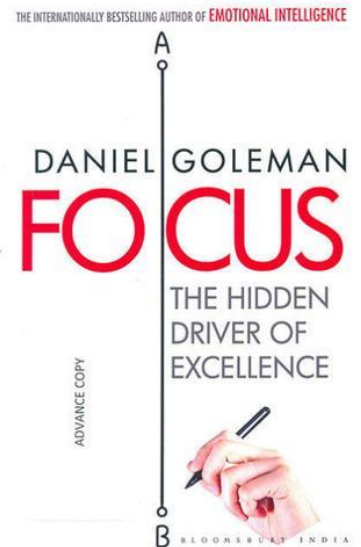


Intuyu Consulting Notes On: Focus – The Hidden Driver of Excellence

Daniel Goleman

The following are my notes and paraphrasing (not a book summary) from reading Daniel Goleman's book and are essentially what I found interesting looking from the perspective of an educator and the possible lessons that educators could learn from the book. You will notice some chapters are missing as I felt that there were insufficient key points that attracted my interest. If the notes interest you please purchase the book!



Chapter 1: The Subtle Faculty

- “People could pay keen attention if their motivation was high enough (but if they didn’t care, they would nod off immediately” ... with reference to attention studies performed by the Pentagon on soldiers (Pg 2)
- “Your Focus is your reality”, Yoda (Pg 3)
- “How we deploy our attention determines what we see”, Anne Triesman, Princeton University (Pg 3)

Chapter 2: Basics

- Two main varieties of distractions – sensory and emotional (pg 14 – 15)
 - Sensory – there is an endless way of incoming stimuli our brain weeds out from the continuous wash of background sounds, shapes and colours, tastes, smells, sensations, etc. Our brain has become very good at being able to tune out of these sensory distractors (e.g. being able to study with music in the background or the hubbub of background noises)
 - Emotional – mention of our name, emotional turmoil in our lives, relationship breakdowns, etc.
 - Those who focus best are relatively immune to emotional turbulence, more able to stay unflappable in a crisis and to keep on an even keel despite life’s emotional waves (managed by our brain’s prefrontal regions to selectively inhibit emotion)
- During sharp focus key circuitry in the prefrontal cortex gets into a synchronized state with the object of that beam of awareness (called phase locking) – Richard Davidson, University of Wisconsin (Pg 16)
 - We learn best with focused attention
 - As we focus on what we are learning, the brain maps that information on what we already know, making new neural connections.
 - Lacking focus, we store no crisp memory of what we are learning
 - The more our minds wander the worse our comprehension (Pg 17)
 - As we read our mind constructs a mental model that lets us make sense of what we are reading and connects it to the universe of such models we already hold that bear on the same topic. This expanding web of understanding lies at the heart of learning.
 - Effectively, as we read a book, our brain constructs a network of pathways that embodies that set of ideas and experiences. “Deep Reading” requires sustained concentration and immersion in a topic rather than hopscotching from one to another, nabbing disconnected factoids (Pg 17-18)

Chapter 3: Attention Top and Bottom

- Brain has two semi-independent, largely separate mental systems (pg 24 ff)
 - Bottom-up mind (Unconscious cognitive biases)
 - Massive computing power operating constantly solving our problems
 - Involuntary and automatic (we are blind to its workings)
 - Operates through networks of association – intuitive
 - Driven by emotions – impulsive
 - Executor of habitual routines
 - Manager of our mental models of the world
 - Multi-tasking and analyses what is in our perceptual field before letting us know what it selects as relevant
 - In original design of the brain (millions of years ago) that favours short-term thinking, impulse and speedy decisions
 - Worked well for basic survival but systemic poor habits (overeating, gambling, addictions, etc) are signs that the system is “out of whack”
 - Requires low power to run thus takes priority
 - Top-down mind (Conscious Awareness – where intentionality lies)
 - Refers to mental activity mostly within the neocortex that can monitor and impose its goals on the bottom-down mind (executive functioning)
 - Slower
 - Voluntary and effortful
 - Seat of self-control which can over-ride automatic routines and emotionally driven impulses
 - Able to learn new models, new plans and take charge of our automaticity to an extent
 - Takes things one at a time and applies more thoughtful analysis
 - Evolved later on (hundreds of thousands of years ago) and adds talents like self-awareness, reflection, deliberation and planning to our skills. It is the driver of the engine which is the bottom up thinking machinery.
 - Is energy consuming (high power) so does not do this for long
 - Cognitive efforts like learning demand active attention
 - The bottom/top systems distribute mental tasks between them so we can make minimal efforts and get optimal results. The more we practice and ritualize a routine the more the routine gets passed off from the top-down mind to the bottom-up mind until it becomes automatic. As we develop mastery of a particular skill the less cognitive effort is required to perform it, thus freeing our attention for the extras seen only among those at the top levels. The more you can relax and trust in bottom-up actions (expertise), the more you free your mind to be nimble. (pg 28)
 - Overloading attention shrinks mental control. More errors occur when we are distracted, stressed or otherwise mentally burdened. In those circumstances, a cognitive control system that ordinarily monitors errors we might make can inadvertently act as a mental prime, increasing the likelihood of that mistake.
- The bottom-up circuitry learns voraciously and quietly taking in lessons continually throughout our day. While it works well most of the time, our emotions and our motives create skews and biases in our attention that we typically, because it is unconscious, don't notice.
- Bottom-up awareness makes us suckers for subconscious priming (e.g. happy smiling faces in the fleeting background of an ad for a drink primes us to drink more)



- Emotional resilience comes down to how quickly we recover from upsets. People who are highly resilient have developed their left pre-frontal area (part of our top down mechanism) to overcome any hijacking by our emotions. Active engagement in attention (self-awareness and metacognition) inhibits mindless mental habits.

Chapter 4: The Value of a Mind Adrift

- Conversely, our mind being adrift is in some ways the default mode of our brain and it allows our creative juices to flow (which are restricted when we are focused and requiring cognitive control). Among the positive functions of a mind wandering are generating scenarios for the future, self-reflection, navigating a complex social world, incubation of creative ideas and giving our circuitry for more intensive focusing a refreshing break (Pg 40-41)
- Open awareness creates a mental platform for creative breakthroughs and unexpected insights. Once we have hit upon a great creative insight we need to switch to a keen focus on how to apply it. Serendipity comes with openness to possibility, then homing in on putting it to use.
- Classic model of the stages of creativity roughly translates to three modes of focus:
 - Orienting – where we search out and immerse ourselves in all kinds of input
 - Selective attention – on the specific creative challenge
 - Open awareness – where we associate freely to let the solution emerge
- In a complex world where almost everyone has access to the same information, new value arises from the original synthesis, from putting ideas together in novel ways, from smart questions that open up untapped potential. Creative insights entail joining elements in a useful, fresh way.
- Open time lets the creative spirit flourish, tight schedules kill it.
- Harvard Business Study “[The power of small wins](#)” found that creative insights flowed best when people had clear goals but also the freedom in how they reached them. And, the most crucial, they had protected time – enough to think freely. The key to breakthroughs in thinking is having small wins – minor innovations and troubling problems solved – on concrete steps towards a larger goal

Chapter 5: Finding Balance

- It is not the chatter of people around us that is the most powerful distractor, but rather the chatter of our own minds. Utter concentration demands these inner voices be stilled.
- Mindfulness – when we turn our full attention to our senses – quiets the default chatter of the mind, it quiets the brain circuitry for me-focused mental chatter (pg 49)
- At the neural level mind wandering and perceptual awareness tend to inhibit each other: internal focus on our train of thought tunes out the senses. This tune-out can be total, as when we get utterly lost in what we are doing.
- Situations that do not demand constant task-focus – particularly boring or routine ones – free the mind to wander. As the mind drifts off and the default network activates more strongly, our neural circuits for task-focus go quiet.
- An even keel in attention reflects a mental mode where we simply notice whatever comes into awareness without getting caught up or swept away by any particular thing. “The capacity to remain with your attention open in a panoramic awareness lets you attend with equanimity, without getting caught in a bottom-up capture that ensnares the mind in judging and reactivity (where we become fixated on something to the exclusion of everything else), whether negative or positive.” (pg 55)

- Tightly focused attention gets fatigued – much like an overworked muscle – when we push to the point of cognitive exhaustion. The signs of mental fatigue, such as a drop in effectiveness and the rise of distractedness and irritability, signify that the mental effort needed to sustain focus has depleted the glucose that feeds neural energy.
- To restore our mental energy we need to switch from effortful attention, where the mind needs to suppress distractions, to letting go and allowing our attention to be captured by whatever presents itself. Disengagement is the first step. Fully focusing on something relaxing where we arouse the sensory systems (walking in the park, playing with your children, nothing that requires effortful focus)

Chapter 6: The Inner Rudder

- What allows people to have a strong inner compass and confidence in one's own guiding values? Self-awareness, particularly accuracy in decoding the internal cues of our body's murmurs, holds the key. Our subtle physiological reactions reflect the sum total of our experience relevant to the decision at hand. In being aware and present to our own reactions makes the difference between a life well lived and one that falters.
- Steve Jobs "Don't let the voice of others' opinions drown out your inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become"
- Our "gut feelings" are messages from the insula (which maps our body's insides via circuitry linking to our gut, heart, liver, lungs, and genitals) and other bottom-up circuits that simplify life decisions for us by guiding our attention towards smarter options. The better we are at reading these messages, the better our intuition. (pg 66)

Chapter 7: Seeing ourselves as others see us

- One surefire test for self-awareness is a 360 degree evaluation. The gap between how you see yourself and how others rate you offers one of the best evaluations you can get anywhere of your own self-awareness.
- Self-awareness appears to diminish with promotions up the organizational ladder. This may be because the higher people rise in an organization the smaller the circle of others willing or courageous enough to speak to them honestly about their quirks.
- Our sense of self dawns in our social interactions; others are our mirrors, reflecting us back to ourselves. In essence, "I am what I think you think I am"
- Not only do we not see ourselves as others see us, we don't hear ourselves as others hear us. When people receive negative performance feedback in a warm supportive tone of voice, they leave feeling positive – despite the negative feedback. But when they receive positive performance reviews in a cold and distant tone of voice, they end up feeling bad despite the good news (pg 71)
- When the tendency to ignore evidence to the contrary spreads into a shared self-deception, it becomes groupthink. The unstated need to protect a treasured opinion (by discounting crucial disconfirming data) drives shared blind spots that lead to bad decisions. (pg 72)
- It takes meta-cognition – in this case, awareness of our lack of awareness – to bring to light what the group has buried in a grave of indifference or suppression. Clarity begins with realizing what we do not notice – and don't notice that we don't notice.
- Candid feedback from those you trust and respect creates a source of self-awareness, one that can help guard against skewed information inputs or questionable assumptions.
- Another antidote to groupthink: expand your circle of connection beyond your comfort zone and inoculate against in-group isolation by building an ample circle of no-BS confidants who keep you honest.

Chapter 8: A Recipe for Self Control

- Our mind deploys self-awareness to keep everything we do on track:
 - Meta-cognition – thinking about thinking – lets us know how our mental operations are going and adjusts them as needed
 - Meta-emotion does the same with regulating the flow of feeling and impulse
 - In the mind’s design, self-awareness is built into regulating our own emotions, as well as sensing what others feel.
- Executive attention (cognitive control) holds the key to self-management.
 - How we focus holds the key to willpower. There are 3 sub-varieties of attention, all aspects of the executive, which are at play when we pit self-restraint against instant gratification. This is what willpower is.
 - Ability to voluntarily disengage our focus from an object of desire that powerfully grabs our attention
 - Ability to resist distraction and keep our focus elsewhere
 - Ability to keep our focus on a goal in the future
 - In a [New Zealand project](#) 1037 children were tracked over decades to determine the impact of self-control on their health, wealth and public safety. What emerged was that willpower was an independent force in life success – in fact, for financial success, self-control in childhood proved a stronger predictor than either IQ or social class of the family of origin. The better the self-control in childhood, the sounder their health, finances, and their relationship to crime and the law.
 - Anything we can do to increase children’s capacity for cognitive control will help them throughout life.
 - Attention, cognitive science tells us, has a limited capacity: working memory creates a bottleneck that lets us hold just so much in our mind at any given moment. As our worries intrude on the limited capacity of our attention, these irrelevant thoughts shrink the bandwidth left for learning. The ability to notice that we are getting anxious and to take steps to renew our focus rests on self-awareness.
 - Willpower keeps us focused on our goals despite the tug of our impulses, passions, habits and cravings. For example, those who have been most successful at losing weight and keeping it off exhibit the most cognitive control when facing a calorie laden morsel. (pg 88)



Chapter 10: The Empathy Triad

- Three aspects of empathy (the ability to focus on what other people experience)
 - Cognitive empathy – allows us to take other people’s perspective, comprehend their mental state, and at the same time manage our own emotions while we take stock of theirs. It helps us choose language that fits their way of understanding.
 - Emotional empathy – means we join the other person in feeling along with them; our body resonates in whatever key of joy or sorrow the person is going through

- Empathetic concern – leads us to care about the person, mobilizing us to help if need be and builds upon the caring and attachment bottom-up systems we have.
- Our circuitry for empathy was designed for face-to-face interactions so online interactions pose special challenges. We rely more on cognitive empathy in non-face-to-face interactions
- Cognitive Empathy
 - Mostly a top-down mental operation
 - An inquisitive nature, which predisposes us to learn from everybody, feeds our cognitive empathy, amplifying our understanding of other people's worlds. In bloom's around two – five yrs of age and continues to develop through the teen years. It shares circuitry with executive attention. However, to understand the feelings of others you need to understand your own feelings. (pg 100)
- Emotional Empathy
 - Operates bottom-up and has its ancient roots in evolution, thus we share this circuitry with other mammals. It is a social connection empathy.
 - These circuits tune in by arousing in our own body the emotional state picked up in the other person
 - Story telling can intimately couple listeners with the storyteller. The more overlap in the neural coupling between a storyteller and listener the better the listener's understanding of the story.
 - Such a shared rapport and connection between a learner and the teacher can put the child's brain in the best mode for learning
 - Begins to operate in early infancy and its capacity can develop like a muscle as we tune into others' feelings as we come to sense facial, vocal and other signals face-to-face
 - We can become good readers of others emotions by tuning in to ourselves because as our emotional empathy capacity grows our body can mirror others' emotions in our body. Thus the more self-aware we become, tuned into our own emotions, the more we can have emotional empathy for others.
- Empathetic Concern
 - Compassion builds on empathy, which in turn requires a focus on others. If self-absorbed we simply do not notice other people.
 - In mammals this circuitry compels attention and concern towards babies and the young and arises more strongly when we become parents.
 - It is a double-edged feeling (having both bottom-up and top-down aspects) where there is implicit discomfort from the direct experience in one person of the distress of the other combined with the social evaluation of how much we value the other person's well-being. Getting this top-down / bottom-up mix right makes a profound difference for people in helping professions to have a balanced approach to empathy for the people they are helping.
 - The more we are distracted (or tired) the less we can exhibit attunement and caring. The need to compete can sometimes suppress empathetic concern as well.
- The more empathetic the interaction the more a person feels heard and cared for. However, there are times we need to be able to insulate the brain from experiencing the wash of emotion such that we can stay calm and concentrate on what needs to be done when certain emotional circumstances.



Chapter 11: Social Sensitivity

- The ability to be social sensitive, be aware of social cues, appears related to cognitive empathy. The ability to pick up implicit norms quickly enables a person to learn the unique mental models of a given culture.
- Culture aside, ground rules shift greatly depending on whom you are with. We can have different social cues and norms within different communities that we belong to. What may be appropriate in one community may not be appropriate in another. Attention to context lets us pick up the subtle social cues that can guide how we behave.
- Attention to implicit norms is largely intuitive, a bottom-up capacity.
- People who excel at organizational influence can not only sense the flow of personal connections but also names the people whose opinions hold the most sway – and so, when they need to, focus on convincing those who will in turn persuade others.
- There are invisible signs of social status and powerlessness – the powerful tend to tune out the powerless – and that deadens empathy (pg 122)
 - We focus on the people we value most
 - Poor people are particularly attentive to other people and their needs because they depend on good relationships with friends and family whom you may need to turn to for help (pg 123)
 - Wealth people can afford to be less aware of the needs of other people and so can be less attentive to them and their suffering
 - The more you care about someone, the more attention you pay – and the more attention you pay, the more you care. Attention interweaves with love. (pg 125)

Chapter 13: System Blindness

- In a system there are no “side effects” – just effects, anticipated or not. Quite often we are blind to the dynamics of the system because we are not aware of the whole system.
- In a complex system cause and effect may be more distant in time and space than we realise.
- One of the worst results of system blindness occurs when leaders implement a strategy to solve a problem – but ignore the pertinent system dynamics (the possible causes of the problems)
 - E.g. shortsighted solution to traffic jams is to build more and wider roads – which leads to short-term relief but over the long term leads to more jams and delay and mass transport loses viability. Our incomplete mental models about traffic jams arises because we fail to take into account the system dynamics of road systems (pg 142 – 143)
 - Our perceptions and mental models are tuned and molded by what helped our forerunners survive in the wild but not to the systemic effects humans are having on our environment (thus the rejection by some of the effect of humans on the world – our mental models perceive the local not the systemic effect)
 - The amygdala (part of the flight-or-fight circuitry) only deals with immediate threats – not long term ones. Our mental models leave us to be frogs in a pot of water whose temperature is increasing bit by bit until we are cooked!



Chapter 14: Distant Threats

- Negative focus leads to discouragement and disengagement. When our neural centres for distress take over, our focus shifts to the distress itself, and how to ease it. We long to tune out (pg 151)
- What we measure we pay more attention to and have goals around (pg 153)
- Trial and error, reverse engineering stuff in your mind – all the ways kids interact with games – that the kind of thinking schools should be teaching. As the world becomes more complex games are becoming better at preparing kids to analyse the ground rules of an unknown reality and operate in the increasingly complex environment. (pg 154)
- Kids are natural system thinkers – why not embed systems literacy into the general education our culture passes onto our children? (pg 154)
 - E.g. rich tasks (or project based learning) that has the students look at bigger system picture of their lives whilst developing their understanding and knowledge of their curriculum.
 - It takes panoramic attention to appreciate system-level interactions. You need to be attentionally flexible, so you can expand and contract your focus, like a zoom lens, to see elements big and small.
 - Education upgrades mental models – why not upgrade their mental models in this way?

Chapter 15: The myth of 10,000 hours

- Anders Ericsson, whose research spawned the 10,000 hour rule of thumb: “You don’t get benefits from mechanical repetition, but by adjusting your execution over and over to get closer to your goal. You have to tweak the system by pushing, allowing more errors at first as you increase your limits’ (pg 163)
- The secret of winning is “deliberate practice”, where an expert coach takes you through well-designed training over months or years, and you give it your full concentration
- Whilst hours and hours of practice are necessary for great performance, it is not sufficient. How experts in any domain pay attention while practicing makes a crucial difference. Experts practiced with full concentration on improving a particular aspect of their performance that a master teacher identified (pg 164)
- Smart practice always include a feedback loop that lets you recognize errors and correct them.
- When practice occurs while we are focusing elsewhere, the brain does not rewire the relevant circuitry for that particular routine. Daydreaming defeats practice.
- Learning how to improve any skill requires top-down focus at first. As you come to master the new routine repeated practice transfer the control of that skill to the bottom-up circuits that eventually make its execution effortless.
- Experts keep paying attention top-down for longer, concentrating actively on those moves they have yet to perfect, correcting what’s not working, refining their mental models, or focusing on particular feedback from a seasoned coach. Those at the top never stop learning. (pg 165)
- Focused attention, like a strained muscle, gets fatigued. World-class competitors build in rest and restoring physical and mental energy as part of their training regimen. Optimal practice maintains optimal concentration.



- When it comes to application of attention, it takes doggedness. You need persistence even though it may be boring (pg 167)
- Specific muscles respond to particular training regimens. So it is with attention training. Concentration on one point of focus is the basic attention builder, but that strength can be applied in many different ways. In the mental gym, as in any fitness training, the specifics of practice make all the difference. (pg 169)
- Negativity focuses us on a narrow range – what’s upsetting us. Positive emotions widen our span of attention, we are free to take it all in. In the grip of positivity, our perceptions shift. When we are feeling good our awareness expands from our usual self-centred focus on “me” to our more inclusive and warm focus on “we” (pg 170)
- In part, positivity reflects the brain’s reward circuitry in action. This circuitry seems vital for motivation and having a sense that what you’re doing is rewarding. Our executive area can trigger this circuit, making us better able to sustain positive feeling, as in keeping going despite setbacks, or just grinding away towards a goal that makes us smile when we picture what reaching it would be like. And positivity, in turn, has great payoffs for performance, energizing us so we can focus better, think more flexibly, and persevere. (pg 171)
- A focus on our strengths urges us toward a desired future and stimulates openness to new ideas, people, and plans. Spotlighting our weaknesses elicits a defensive sense of obligation and guilt, closing us down. (pg 172)
- You need a negative focus to survive but a positive one to thrive. The bias found by [Marcial Losada](#) to be most effective was a positive / negative ratio of at least 2.9 good feelings to every negative moment – this is true for high performing teams as well as people who flourish in life. (pg 173)
- Coaching with a positive bias that begins with a person’s dreams and goals that lead to a learning path that yields that vision are far more effective than those that focus on a person’s weakness.

Chapter 16: Brains on Games

- The elements of games (whether online or in reality) that would be both attention grabbing and able to develop key cognitive functions are (pg 183):
 - Clear objectives at progressively more difficult levels
 - Adapting to the pace of the specific learner
 - Immediate feedback and graduated practice challenges to the point of mastery
 - Practicing the same skills in different contexts, encouraging skill transference

Chapter 17: Breathing Buddies

- It makes a difference to teach students to self-regulate rather than relying on punishments and rewards
 - We help students learn how to put their problems in perspective and develop strategies to resolve them. They can match the problem to the strategy (pg 188)
 - The big lesson for the kids is to tune in and know what to do to care for yourself
 - Evaluations found that children who needed the greatest help – those at “high-risk” for derailing in life – benefitted the most: significant boosts in attention and perceptual sensitivity, and drops in aggressiveness, downbeat moods and frustration with school
 - What is more, teachers increased their sense of well-being, auguring well for the learning atmosphere in their classrooms

- Stopping on cue is the holy grail of cognitive control. The better children are at stopping on cue the stronger their prefrontal wiring for cognitive control becomes (pg 189)
 - Kids who can ignore impulse, filter out what's irrelevant, and stay focused on a goal fare best in life.
 - Being able to name your feelings and put that together with your memories and associations turns out to be crucial for self-control
- By teaching kids the skills that help them to calm down and focus we lay the foundation of self-awareness and self-management on which you can scaffold the other social and emotional learning skills such as active listening, identifying feelings and so on. (pg 196)
- Benefits of Mindfulness (pg 197)
 - Boosts the classical attention network in the brain's fronto-parietal system that works to allocate attention (allows you to disengage you focus from one thing, move it to another, and stay with that new object of attention)
 - Improves selective attention, inhibiting the pull of distractors and focus on what's important to us
 - Improves the ability of students to understand since wandering minds punch holes in comprehension
 - People are able to manage both their attention and their emotions better and thus are more able to create positive relationships and have effective interactions (pg 198)
 - Mindfulness develops our capacity to observe our moment-to-moment experience in an impartial, non-reactive manner
 - Mindfulness training decreases activity in me-circuitry and the less self-talk the more we can experience the moment.

Chapter 18: How Leaders Direct Attention

- Directing attention towards where it needs to go is a primal task of leadership. Talent lies in the ability to shift attention to the right place at the right time, sensing trends and emerging realities and seizing opportunities.
- Attention tends to focus on what has meaning – what matters. The story a leader tells can imbue a particular focus with such resonance, and so implies a choice for the others on where to put their attention and energy. Leadership itself hinges on effectively capturing and directing the collective attention (pg 210)
- A leader's field of attention – that is the particular issues and goals he/she focuses on – guides the attention of those who follow them, whether or not the leader explicitly articulates it.
- A strategic plan represents the desired pattern of organizational attention (pg 211)
- “Deciding what not to do is as important as deciding what to do”, Steve Jobs
- The original meaning of Strategy was from the battlefield and means ‘the art of the leader’
 - Winning strategies require both inner and outer focus
 - The best leaders have systems awareness (an outer focus) and the ability to communicate that understanding with passion and skill, drawing on cognitive and emotional empathy (inner focus). It drives how you deal with values, vision, mission, strategy, goals, tactics, deliverables, evaluation, and the feedback loop that restarts the whole process (pg 213-214)
 - Nimble organisations have two strategies that are always in tension and the best decision makers are able to balance the two and know when to switch from one to the other:

- Exploitation – the ability to refine and learn how to improve an existing capacity
- Exploration – the ability to disengage from the current focus to search for new possibilities
- To able to make the switch between the two strategies requires the ability to disengage from a pleasing routine and fight the inertia of ruts – make cognitive effort to break free.

Chapter 19: The Leader's Triple Focus

- Successful leaders are constantly seeking out new information. They want to understand the territory they operate in. They need to be alert to new trends, and to spot emerging patterns that might matter to them (pg 224)
- Leaders who inspire can articulate shared values that resonate and motivate the group. These are leaders people love to work with, who surface the vision that moves everyone. But to speak from the heart, to the heart, a leader must first know her values. That takes self-awareness. (pg 225)
- Inspiring leadership demands attuning both to an inner emotional reality and to that of those we seek to inspire
- The common cold of leadership is poor listening – it has links to a lack of empathy and also the ability to stop our self-talk. We pay attention in moments that matter most to us. But amid the din and distraction of work life, poor listening has become epidemic.
- The failure of being a “pacesetter”, someone who uses a command and coerce type of leadership strategy where they simply give orders and expect obedience, is that he/she fails to connect with people and runs roughshod over human concerns. While a keen focus on goals matter, if they are achieved at the cost of inspirational leadership and empathy then those costs lead to later failure.
- To anticipate how people will react, you have to read people's reactions to you. That takes self-awareness and empathy in a self-reinforcing cycle. You become more aware of how you're coming across to other people (pg 231)
- With high self-awareness you can readily develop good self-management. If you manage yourself better, you will influence better. (pg 232)



Chapter 20: What makes a good leader?

- Once you are in a given job amongst your peers, specific competencies like self-discipline, empathy, and persuasion are far stronger forces in success than IQ. (pg 233)
- Outstanding leaders are those who show strength in a range of non-cognitive competencies (e.g empathy, self-awareness, thinking globally, creating an inspiring shared vision, embracing change, persistence, resilience, drive to achieve goals, etc)
- In practical terms, to mentor and advise someone to be a leader means (pg 238):
 - Listening within, to articulate an authentic vision of overall direction that energises others even as it sets clear expectations
 - Coaching, based on listening to what people want from their life, career, and current job. Paying attention to people's feelings and needs, and showing concern

- Listening to advice and expertise; being collaborative and making decisions by consensus when appropriate
- Celebrating wins, laughing, knowing that having a good time together is not a waste of time but a way to build emotional capital.
- These leadership styles, used in tandem or as appropriate to the moment, widen a leader's focus to draw on inner, other and outer inputs. That maximal bandwidth, and wider understanding and flexibility of response it affords, allows for a more energized organizational climate and better results.
- Two of the main mental ruts that threaten the ability to pay attention to the human dimensions of organisations are unquestioned assumptions and overly relied-on rules of thumb (pg 240)
 - Solution is environmental awareness – constant questioning and listening, inquiry, probing, and reflecting – gathering insights and perspectives from people
- Top performing teams follow norms that enhance collective self-awareness, such as surfacing simmering disagreements and settling them before they boil over (pg 244-245)
 - One resource for dealing with team emotions is to create time and space to talk about what is on people's mind
 - To harvest the collective wisdom of a group you need to have mindful presence and a sense of safety. You need a shared mental model that this is a safe place.
 - A team's empathy applies not only to sensitivity amongst members, but also to understanding the view and feelings of other people and groups the team deals with – group level empathy.
 - Top teams also periodically reflect on their functioning as a group to make needed changes

