



Emotional Style Assessment

6. ATTENTION

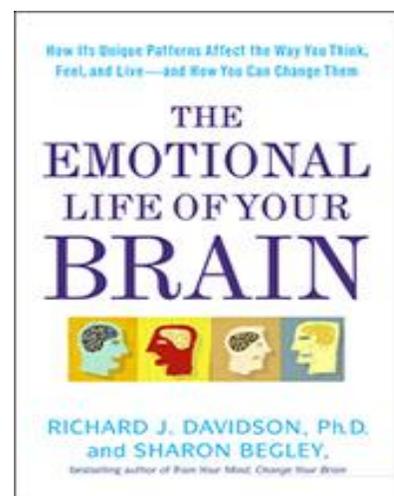
The ability to focus attention is usually thought of as a component of cognitive ability. The reason that it is included as one of the emotional style dimensions is that while plain old sights and sounds are distracting enough, when they come with an emotional overlay they can be even more so (someone shouts and breaks a glass makes it harder to focus). Attention and emotion are intimate partners. The ability to screen out emotional distractions is correlated with the ability to screen out sensory distractions. A Focused person can zoom in on a single conversation at a noisy party, while an Unfocused one is constantly shifting attention to the most attention-grabbing stimulus.

The following ten questions are designed to help you better understand your Emotional Style of 'Attention'. If you are tempted to think long and hard about a question, or if you feel that there are too many nuances or exceptions, resist. The most accurate results come from making a snap judgment about whether a question is True or False about you. There are no right answers here - take it from the profile's creator, CIHM Founder Richard Davidson. This is not a pop quiz - it's about better understanding who you are, how you perceive the world, and how you navigate the obstacles of life.

The profile consists of 10 simple 'True/False' statements and should take only a couple minutes to complete. You can even ask someone close to you to answer these questions about you for an additional perspective. That serve as a reality check.

Following the assessment are some exercises that can help you adjust your Attention dimension. Nothing is guaranteed, of course, and what you get out of it depends a great deal on what you put in.

Remember, this is simply a starting point to learning more about Emotional Style. To learn more about how Dr. Davidson describes the neural underpinnings of Emotional Style, the remaining five dimensions and strategies and tips to shift within the continuum of each, we encourage you to read the book!

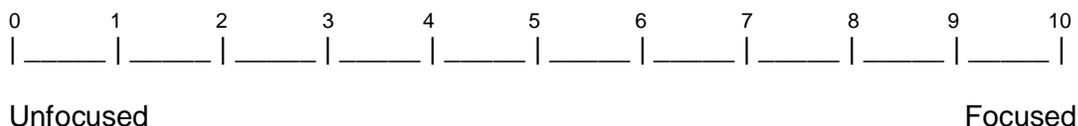


ATTENTION ASSESSMENT

Question	T or F?	Score
1. I can concentrate in a noisy environment.		
2. When I'm in a situation in which a lot is going on and there is a great deal of sensory simulation, such as at a party or in a crowded airport, I can keep myself from getting lost in a train of thought about any particular thing I see.		
3. If I decide to focus my attention on a particular task, I find that I am mostly able to keep it there.		
4. If I am at home and trying to work, the noises of a television or other people make me very distracted.		
5. I find that if I sit quietly even for a few moments, a flood of thoughts rush into my mind and I find myself following multiple strands of thought, often without knowing how each one began.		
6. If I am distracted by some unexpected event, I can refocus my attention on what I had been doing.		
7. During periods of relative quiet, such as when I'm sitting on a train or a bus or waiting in line at a store, I notice a lot of the things around me.		
8. When an important solo project requires my full and focused attention, I try to work in the quietest place I can find.		
9. My attention tends to get captured by stimuli and events in the environment, and it is difficult for me to disengage once this happens.		
10. It's easy for me to talk with another person in a crowded situation like a cocktail party or a cubicle in an office; I can tune out others in such an environment even when, with concentration, I can make out what they're saying.		
TOTAL =		

Scoring: Give yourself one point for each True answer to questions 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 and 10, and one point for each False answer to questions 4, 5, 8 and 9. All other answers score zero.

Plot your score on this scale:



In many ways, being able to screen out emotional distractions provides the building block for other aspects of our emotional life; for example, it can help with the dimensions of Self-awareness and Social Intuition. As with the other dimensions, a person can be too focused or too unfocused, depending on the situation. You may be too focused if you are so intently focused on one aspect of a situation that you miss the bigger picture. Being too unfocused, on the other hand, is its own hell, one that a large part of the pharmaceutical industry is happy to address. You may miss what people are telling you because you are off in your own world, you are often unable to finish one task before being distracted by another.

Key Tools to adjust your Attention include:

1. Mindfulness Meditation. This will help to improve focus. It involves observing your thought and feelings from the perspective of a nonjudgmental third party. One attends just to the bare facts of a perception received through the senses or the mind, without reacting to them in any way.

By learning to observe nonjudgmentally, you can break the chain of associations that typically arise from every thought. If you find that you are beginning to judge the thoughts, return to a state of nonjudgmental awareness. Practicing breathing awareness is a good place to start to learn mindfulness meditation:

- a. Choose a time of day when you are the most awake and alert. Sit upright on the floor or a chair, keeping the spine straight, and maintaining a relaxed but erect posture so that you do not get drowsy.
- b. Now focus on your breathing, on the sensations it triggers throughout your body. Notice how your abdomen moves with each inhalation and exhalation.
- c. Focus on the tip of your nose, noticing the different sensations that arise with each breath.
- d. When you notice that you have been distracted by unrelated thoughts or feelings, simply return your focus to your breathing.

Try this for 5 to 10 minutes, twice a day, gradually increasing the time each day to maybe 20 minutes. Then move on to Focused Attention Meditation.

2. Focused Attention Meditation. Also known as One-Pointed Meditation:

- a. In a quiet room free of distractions, sit with your eyes open. Find a small object such as a coin, a button on your shirt, a candle, or an eyelet on your shoe. It is important that the object of attention be visual, rather than your breath, your body image, or other mental objects.
- b. Focus all your attention upon this one object. Keep your eyes trained on it.

c. If your attention wanders, calmly try to bring it back to that object.

Do this daily, initially for about ten minutes. If you find that you are able to maintain your focus for most of that time, increase your practice by about ten minutes per month, until you reach one hour.

If you feel that your attention is excessively focused and wish to broaden it in order to take in more of the world, then open-monitoring or open presence meditation such as Present Moment Awareness or the Body Scan can nudge you toward that end of the Attention dimension:

3. Present Moment Awareness. Also used for the Social Intuition dimension, this can help you to pay attention to what is happening around you. To detect social cues, particularly subtle ones, you need to focus on things like tone of voice, body language, and facial expression. This is basically a matter of practice.

How are people reacting to what you are doing or saying? What is their body language saying? What are their expressions telling you? Is their tone of voice suggesting that you are on track, or way off base?

4. Body Scan. To develop a broader focus, pay attention to what is happening inside you. To detect internal cues, particularly subtle ones, you need to focus on your current bodily feelings. The body often manifests physically what we are really feeling emotionally.

a. Sit as you would for the breathing exercise.

b. Move your attention systematically around your body, from one location to the next – toe, foot ankle, leg, knee. Notice the specific sensation at each, such as tingling or pressure or temperature. Don't think about those parts of the body, but experience the sensations from them. In this way you cultivate awareness of your body in the context of nonjudgmental awareness.

c. As you learn this skill, begin to do it when you are in various situations throughout the day. What is your body wisdom telling you at the moment? How does that inform you of your true feelings?

Practicing these skills makes you better at them, of course. Start small if you have a long way to go, and gradually add to your skill set. You may have noticed by now that many of these tools and exercises help your mastery of more than one emotional dimension.

Emotions help us appreciate others and the world around us; they make life meaningful and fulfilling.