



Disclaimer: These are rough notes we use to prep for the show. Please excuse typos, etc.

Simple Life Together Episode 41: Are You Losing Focus? Even Ben Franklin Had a To Do List! (music)

“Hi and welcome to Simple Life Together, a podcast dedicated to leading a simpler life in the modern world”

I’m Dan Hayes.

And I’m Vanessa Hayes.

On the last episode of the show we learned all about How to Organize Your Photos!

So, today we’re going to talk about focus.

Thesis Statement

We’re in what could easily be called the Age of Distraction. Between all the media sources we’re exposed to, all the forms of Social Media, instant communication and technology at our fingertips...we’ve just become inundated with ready-made distractions to keep us from

meeting our goals and threaten the very simplicity we're trying to build in our lives.

Major Takeaway

So today, we'd like to talk about some ways to beat the distractions that keep us from focusing on what's important to us. We'll go over a few personal examples of distractions we face and share a couple of tools we use to help keep us on track.

Topic: Types of distractions and problems

- External and Internal distractions
 - Internal distractions are your subconscious thoughts that get in the way. And it may not be negative self talk (like fear and self-doubt) that gets in the way....euphoric thoughts can be just as distracting! Think about how distracting it was for me to concentrate after meeting you Dan!!!
 - External distractions can be a phone call, a loud noise, a FedEx delivery at your front door, or all the ads you see online and on FB!
 - This is what we're primarily talking about today...external distractions.

- Here are some problems we face
 - We're constantly "switched on"
 - NAPO conference leadership forum guest speaker [Camille L. Preston](#) owner of AIM leadership and author of Rewired...explains how an overuse of technology and its lingering effects--being overwired--is damaging our brains, our bodies and our personal productivity.
 - She talks about the dopamine effect and its correlation to our addiction to technology.
 - Too much technology/stimuli...can affect productivity and even our bonding and connection with others.
 - Every time you hear that ding on the computer...or a tweet from your phone...or a text notification, you are tapping into that dopamine release and slowly getting more and more addicted to technology...which is a major distraction.
 - Matter of fact, there is a lot of talk out there and studies being conducted on how technology is literally rewiring our

brains and negatively affecting our ability to focus and and connect....sounds like an oxymoron.

- There are even studies that claim ADD is on the rise as a result of too much exposure to technology.

- Smartphone addiction “Crackberry”

- Email
- This is one of the biggest distractors...it’s like “Oh boy...just got an email...gotta do something...gotta reply right now...don’t want anyone to think I’m ignoring them or that I’m unprofessional!” Sheesh!

- Too many apps, constantly updating

- I’m really bad about updating them because I usually don’t notice them until I’m on the road or somewhere with weak internet, so then I don’t update and before I know it I’ve got 20 app updates on my phone or iPad.

- On a constant search for hot new apps

- For Dan, he’s on the search for the perfect app....for me, I’m on the search

for the perfect bedspread for my daughters room!

- Social media
 - Wait for responses
- 24 hour news cycle
 - It's like we become secondary victims when tragedy happens because we're getting real-time and continuous updates making us feel like we're there.
 - Not to mention too much jumping to conclusions on placing blame, finding out the cause or who's to blame, etc. It's a major distraction.
- Steven Pressfield's "Resistance"
 - Following the rabbit down the hole
 - I totally fall victim to this on a daily basis and its a daily struggle to overcome the resistance. House chores, honey-do lists, personal projects or that glass of wine staring at me are all forms of the resistance keeping me from tackling more important items.
- Immediate (if not instant) gratification

- I've forgotten how to read!
 - I've trained myself to be a short form information consumer
 - Not as fulfilling as long form
 - Not as much depth
 - For me it doesn't sink in as well
 - Short term memory?
 - It's like multi-tasking for me...it's instant gratification at first but then I get overwhelmed and stressed out

Solutions:

- Taking some time to analyze my “always switched on” habits
 - Do we wait for the real (snail mail)
 - Taking “digital sabbath” or unplugging time
 - Camille Preston talks about people should unplug daily and more regularly to really focus. At her talk, she asked the audience “when do you find you are the most focused? Or when do you get your best ideas?” Most people said the shower because usually you can't take your phone in there, you're usually alone, and it's therapeutic/cleansing (although I just saw an ad for a

waterproof smartphone....no!!!!!!)

- Designate times (schedule) times for things that distract, such as social media and email.

- We don't feel the need to have the news running in the background 24/7. Now, we pick the times and limit how much we watch because we realized you get just as much info in ½ an hour as you would in 1 or 2 hours because it's mostly the same 3-5 repeated news stories.
- As for email, [Lifehacker](#) and many other productivity specialists recommend not checking email first thing in the morning! There is a much much greater chance of you derailing your important project if you allow yourself to get distracted with emails and the unforeseen and unplanned tasks that are buried in them.
- Here are some other email tips that might be helpful:
 - Create separate email addresses for separate tasks (one for work, one for personal, one for your blog readers, etc)

- Check your work mail only during work time and personal mail during personal time
 - Disable automatic download of emails. Instead download them manually during that “pre-determined” time to check them.
 - Or simply turn off your internet or use an app like the Self Control App or Rescue Time. An app that lets you block your own access to distracting websites, your mail servers, or anything else on the Internet. Just set a period of time to block for, add sites to your blacklist, and click "Start." Until that timer expires, you will be unable to access those sites--even if you restart your computer or delete the application.
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- Evaluate what apps/programs really work for you.
 - If it ain't broke...
 - Focusing on those that work allows you to achieve mastery

- Evernote
- Dropbox
- Google Docs vs BizExpense Tracker example
- Google Maps
- It's like, I'm sure there are cooler time management, to-do or grocery apps, but I'm good with what's working for me like Google Tasks and grocery gadget. Until they no longer serve me or I need better functionality, I'll just stick with what I know.
- Schedule
 - Planning out your day
 - I'm a Ben Franklin fan. I'm amazed at what he accomplished in his lifetime.
 - He was a "simplicity guy" too!
 - Here's his Daily Schedule (read)
 - Notice no time set for Facebook or watching cat videos on YouTube?
 - Set aside time to read...actual books!
 - Well you know I'm a big fan of schedules and routines..the challenge is staying dedicated and disciplined with it.
- Identify your triggers or what's causing your distractions.
 - triggers can be your weaknesses, like FB,

- email, snacking, watching junk tv. etc.
- but by identifying your triggers you become more aware
- and being aware will in turn move you from subjectively looking at a problem to objectively looking at it. And when you can be objective about your triggers, then you lose that sense of being a victim to your triggers and instead gain some ownership and power over them.

Conclusion: So, I think we all go through bouts of dealing with a lack of focus. Sometimes it's just that the subject matter isn't as interesting as you'd like. But sometimes it's because we've picked up bad habits along the way that are dulling our focus. Maybe some time spent evaluating what's causing your lack of focus and implementing some of the tools we discussed today can help you get that razor's edge back to your focus.

Question for the Listeners/Readers: So, have you been finding that you've been losing focus lately? What are some ways you've lost focus? What made you realize that your focus isn't as sharp as it used to be. What tools can you share that might help?

- Share your thoughts by leaving comments in the shownotes at SimpleLifeTogether.com/041

THING Segment

Dan's Thing: My Thing this week is the new Evernote Web Clipper for Chrome. Honestly, I was kinda blown away with this update. The web clipper has a whole new look and tons more functionality. There are so many big changes but here are the biggest:

- The functions of Skitch are now built into the web clipper! So, all the things I covered in the free Skitch tutorial you can now also use in the Chrome web clipper, too.
- You can check out the Skitch tutorial SimpleLifeTogether.com/Tutorials
- There's a Settings function so you can set all your defaults for how you like to clip. Choose between:
 - screenshots
 - full article
 - simplified article (incorporates the functions of Evernote Clearly)
 - Bookmark (so maybe a new Notebook titled

Bookmarks in in order?)

- Sharing, tagging, Notebook selection...it's all in there!
- I'll put a link in the shownotes to Evernote's page that describes all the new features in the Chrome Web Clipper

Vanessa's "THING": Storyline book

CONTACT INFO: Remember...if you have questions or comments you can always reach us at Dan@SimpleLifeTogether.com & @DanielHayes on Twitter, or Vanessa@SimpleLifeTogether.com & @GetSimplifized on Twitter and there are links to our Google Plus profiles on the website.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

ScanSnap Scanner Sale at Amazon: Got an email from Amazon about a sale on ScanSnap scanners and it looks like now is the time to save some significant money on a ScanSnap if you're in the market for one. So I'll put a quick link to the deals at SimpleLifeTogether.com/scan

New Look for SLT.C: We're changing themes to better support the kind of content we want to share. As we've

said in the past, look for more blog posts, more videos, and a different look to the site and the podcast cover art, as well. We're trying to standardize things a bit, too. Look forward to some subtle changes in the format of the show. We're switching to one unified topic per episode, shooting for 40 minutes, versus our "under an hour" goal that we previously followed. And we've standardized placement of our announcements, feedback, and contact info. We want the content up front and you probably do too. All these little tweaks will free us up to provide more and more content on the website! So...lots of changes in the wind!

Platform Conference:

If you're trying to build your platform within your company, industry or field, or your business, you may want to consider Michael Hyatt's Platform Conference.

- It runs from 3-5 November, in Dallas TX this time, at the Omni Dallas Hotel at Park West.
- Michael and his team have given us a special discount code just for Simple Life Together listeners
- So if you're interested, to register for the event or to just learn more, go to **SimpleLifeTogether.com/Platform**,
- Use Coupon Code **SIMPLE** to save \$100 off your registration.
- Vanessa and I will be there and we hope to see you

there, too!

Green Juicing Intensive Clinic: You met Farnoosh Brock back in [Episode 19](#). She is the premier expert on juicing and author of The Healthy Juicer's Bible. Her Green Juicing Intensive Clinic is marked down from \$147 to \$97 for a limited time. I went through the original class of this and I still take part in everything I learned there and in her Private Facebook Group. If you're interested in juicing, just go to SimpleLifeTogether.com/juice to learn more about The Green Juicing Intensive Clinic. By the way, she gives out lots of freebies with Clinic membership, so check it out at SimpleLifeTogether.com/juice.

Edit & Forget It: We have people sign up every day for the Edit & Forget It Challenge! It's never too late, so just head over to SimpleLifeTogether.com where you can sign up for Edit & Forget It over in the right column of the site

Tutorials: We'll be hosting all our free tutorials and guides on the Tutorials Page from now on. So, to reach them, just click on the Tutorials Tab at the top of the page.

Feedback: If you get the chance to leave us a rating and review in iTunes, please head on over to SimpleLifeTogether.com/iTunes where we'll show you exactly how it's done.

iTunes:

Entertaining and insightful! BossladyTanya wrote: I really enjoy listening to this podcast. Both have so much to offer and they completely compliment each other. Their interactions with each other are adorable and I always take many useful tips away from each show. I just started listening and will continue.

The Great Motivator ! MsMelanie718 wrote: Vanessa, I chose one thing that irritated me and now half the room is organized! Dan listening to you has pushed me into exploring my Google Drive. I'd love to hear a podcast on that. Keep up the good work I just love what you're doing.

I've learned so much! Adlynn J wrote: Dan and Vanessa are so supportive of each other plus funny and entertaining. I've finally caught up on almost all the past episodes. I say finally but 30 something episodes in less than 2 weeks is pretty determined. I love the variety and haven't really heard anything

that I couldn't use.

Wrap Up:

OK, so that's it for Episode 41 of Simple Life Together. So today, we talked about some ways to beat the distractions that keep us from focusing on what's important to us. We shared a few personal examples of distractions we face and a couple of tools we use to help keep us on track. Hopefully these tips will help you take more firm control of your time, and turn your Age of Distraction into your Age of Focus instead.

My Thing was the new Evernote Web Clipper for Chrome and Vanessa's thing was Donald Miller's Storyline program.

As usual, you can find all the links and info from today's show at SimpleLifeTogether.com/041.

So let us know what you think of the show and how you're simplifying your life, too! We'd love to hear from you.

So, until next time, we hope you enjoy your...

SIMPLE LIFE TOGETHER

Resources and Links:

[Platform Conference](#)

Coupon Code for \$100 Off: **SIMPLE**

[The Book: Platform: Get Noticed in a Noisy World](#)

[Podcasting A to Z course](#) Discount Code : **SIMPLE** for \$500 off!

[Chrome Web Clipper](#)