

# Focused Distraction<sup>1</sup>

## ***Recite A Prayer, Mishnah, Poem, etc.***

Recite something that you know by heart, like *mishnayos*, *gemara*, or the words of a song. If you don't already know a verse by heart, learn something by heart just for times like these. Focus intently on the meaning of the words you're saying. If you're somewhere public, recite it in your head and focus on visualizing the words as if they were written on a page. If you're alone, say them out loud and place your attention on how your lips form these words.

## ***Test Your Memory***

Find a photo or picture that's brimming with detail (like a busy city scene) and focus on it for around five to ten seconds. Next, turn the image facedown and recreate the picture in your mind with as many details as possible. Alternatively, you can make a mental list of all the details you remember from the image.

## ***Category-Thinking***

Select a couple of broad categories like "countries," "animals," "football teams," or "tractates of the Talmud." Give yourself a few minutes to mentally list as many items as possible for each category.

## ***Play with Numbers***

Playing with numbers can help to focus your attention (and it doesn't matter if you don't like math!). For example:

- Mentally recite your times tables.
- Start at 100 and count backwards.
- Pick a number and think of six ways you could make that number, for example,  $4 + 11 = 15$ ,  $21 - 6 = 15$ ,  $7.5 \times 2 = 15$  and so on. Don't worry. There will be no math on the Final.

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<sup>1</sup> *Strategies To Redirect Your Thoughts And Distract Your Mind*. (2020). UH Connor Integrative Health Network.  
<https://www.uhhospitals.org/Healthy-at-UH/articles/2020/04/strategies-to-redirect-your-thoughts-and-distract-your-mind>

**Create an Anchoring Phrase**

Create a sentence to anchor you to the present moment. For instance, you could say, "My name is X. I'm X years of age and live in X-town in X-country. Today is Monday, 3 *lyar*, and it's 3:08pm in the afternoon. I'm sitting in an office on the second floor. I'm alone in the room right now..." You can keep on adding details and expanding on the sentence until your mind becomes centered in the present moment and calm. For example, "It's cloudy outside, and I can hear the sounds of traffic outside. I'm hungry, so I'm going to get a snack..."

**Describe a Mundane Task**

Bring to mind a task or activity that you do often or well, like making a cup of tea, setting your alarm before you go to bed, or making a simple meal. Go through each step slowly and pay attention to detail, as though you were instructing someone how to do it.

**Describe Your Environment**

Look around you and take in as many details about your environment as possible. Engage all of your five senses. You could observe that "This street has 12 trees on it, but there are at least three times as many cars. I can see that several windows are open on one side of the street. It's sunny today, and the sky is blue, but it's still quite chilly. I can hear a baby crying, and I can smell fumes from the traffic..."