

Easing mental overload: Energy follows attention

Adaptive module

~20 min

Concentrating costs almost nothing: when fully focused, the brain uses only about 5% more energy than at rest (research by Sharna Jamadar). What drains people is not their thoughts but the emotions attached to them, such as fear of letting go and perfectionism. Building on this shift, the module teaches how to maintain the three energies (physical, mental, and emotional) and makes the case for a rare practice: non-participation, which managers protect for their teams.

— LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 01 Understand why fatigue comes less from thoughts than from the emotions attached to each issue: overload is primarily emotional.
- 02 Maintain your three energies (physical, mental, and emotional) by identifying what drains and what refills each one.
- 03 Protect your attention: use deep focus blocks of 90 to 120 minutes, close open loops, and turn off notifications in time slots.
- 04 Practice non-participation with judgment and, as a manager, protect your team's attention, with AI as a partner, not a parasite.

— WHO IT'S FOR

Anyone who wants to clear their head and choose where to focus, and managers who protect their team's attention.

- **Prerequisite:** none

— HOW THE MODULE WORKS

Self-paced, with practice tailored to each learner.

- 1 **Self-assessment:** on 9 dimensions, to gauge current habits and guide the practice.
- 2 **Expert video:** 10 minutes, with 3 pauses for reflection.
- 3 **Practice scenarios:** the first 2 chosen from the self-assessment, then 16 optional ones. Every answer gets feedback: what it leads to, and one way to improve.
- 4 **Dated commitment:** one action to try, written by the learner or picked from the suggestions.
- 5 **Memo to download:** key takeaways, questions, commitment, personal notes and checklists.

— A SAMPLE PRACTICE SCENARIO

Farida has 22 open files. She has redone her list and switched software; her head is still full. One issue keeps coming back: a client disputes Farida's count of vacant homes and is asking for the report to be withdrawn. Her manager offers her half an hour on Thursday. How can Farida use it?

— ASSESSMENT AND COMPLETION

Pass mark: 80%

The score takes into account your answers to the practice scenarios, your commitment and, where relevant, any additional learning activities. Passing requires a commitment and a score of at least 80%.

METHODS & MODELS

- Attention residue when switching tasks — inspired by Sophie Leroy ("Why is it so hard to do my work?" 2009)
- Deep focus blocks (90–120 minutes) — inspired by Cal Newport's deep work
- Afthonios "3 energy bowls" method (physical, mental, emotional)

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Sharna Jamadar, Monash University — the brain uses about 20% of the body's energy budget, and only ~5% more energy during intense concentration
- Sophie Leroy, "Why is it so Hard to do My Work?" (2009) — attention residue when switching tasks; up to 40% of productive time affected, according to work by the American Psychological Association
- Effect of mild dehydration (1–2%) on attention — documented in hydration physiology
- Hülshager & Schewe, Journal of Occupational Health Psychology (2011) — emotional labor, fatigue, and well-being at work