

TSD MINDFULNESS

SINGLE POINTED FOCUS

Single-pointed focus is a practice in paying attention to a single stimulus. Experts report improved short term memory, better executive functioning skills and reduced anxiety are some of the benefits of this practice. The reason single-pointed works is because when we focus on a stimulus we disengage our consciousness from our thoughts.

Understanding of the ebb and flow of our attention is crucial to single-pointed focus. It is natural to lose focus of our stimulus. When this happens, we simply “catch ourselves” and return our focus to the stimulus without judgement. The thalamus, in our brains, is integral to single-pointed focus. The thalamus relays sensory information from our bodies to our brains. Specifically, it passes sensory information, such as physical sensations, sounds and sights to our cerebral cortexes for interpretation. Interestingly, The thalamus breaks our attention approximately four times a minute to scan for other stimuli. For this reason, we can be kind to ourselves when we unconsciously shift our attention away from our stimulus of choice.

Stimuli we can use for our single-pointed focus practice are sounds in our environment, physical sensations (breath is a combination of sound and physical sensation), and with eyes open gazing at an object. Our mindfulness practice involves noticing as many details and subtleties about our stimulus as possible.

