



VIDEO SUMMARY

Focus: A Superpower in the Age of Distraction

Resource person: Nir Eyal | Author of *Indistractable* and *Hooked*; behavioural-design writer who has taught at Stanford | Curated from Lenny's Podcast

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Eyal's starting point is a test of intention. He calls an action traction when it moves towards something you planned and distraction when it takes you away from that plan. Email can therefore become a distraction during a writing block, while a planned rest period can count as traction. The distinction depends on deciding in advance how you want to use your attention.

His four-part sequence begins with internal triggers. Boredom, uncertainty, fatigue and anxiety can prompt a quick escape into easier activity. Eyal suggests naming the feeling and delaying the escape for ten minutes while observing the urge with curiosity. He gives a 90 per cent figure for internally triggered distraction without tracing it to a study in the episode, so the number should be treated cautiously. Research on urge surfing is also narrower than general workplace focus: one early study involved cigarette cravings and found a change in smoking behaviour without a significant difference in reported urges.

The second step is to turn values into calendar time. Eyal divides the week among care for oneself, relationships and work, then distinguishes reactive work such as messages and meetings from reflective work such as writing, analysis and planning. Timeboxes make the available hours visible. A weekly review can compare the plan with what happened and adjust the next schedule. In a schedule sync, a worker shows a manager both the calendar and the work that does not fit, then asks the manager to settle priorities.

The remaining steps deal with the environment and pre-commitment. Audit notifications, protect demanding work, and give colleagues a clear signal when interruption would be costly. If those measures are insufficient, Eyal proposes price, identity and effort pacts. These add a consequence, a personal commitment or some friction before a likely distraction. Pacts come last and should remain voluntary; financial penalties and rigid identity claims can add needless stress.

The workplace section matters for faculty. Eyal argues that teams need psychological safety to discuss overload and interruption, a shared forum for changing norms, and leaders who model the boundaries they expect. Personal routines help, while workload, staffing and communication norms still require institutional action.