

Learning Tip:

Focused vs Diffused Thinking Modes

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Focused vs Diffused Thinking Modes

According to legend, inventor Thomas Edison (1847–1931) used the following technique to tap into his subconscious mind for ideas and inventions. Here is how it worked:

1. He would hold a set of ball bearings in his hand while sitting in a chair.
2. As he dozed off, the ball bearings would slip from his grasp and fall, waking him up.
3. He would then gather the ideas from this state of relaxed and drifting thinking and get back to work.

This illustrates the power of deliberately entering a state of mental disengagement to stimulate creative insights.

Focused vs Diffused Thinking Modes

Our brains operate in two primary thinking modes, each with distinct characteristics:

- ▶ **Focused mode:** In this state, we concentrate intensely, filtering out distractions to engage deeply with a specific task or problem. Think of it as “laser focus.”
- ▶ **Diffused Mode:** This relaxed state allows seemingly random thoughts and ideas to emerge, fostering big-picture thinking and creativity.

Just as building muscle requires alternating between exertion (focused) and rest (diffused), our brain needs to switch back and forth between these two modes to learn effectively and generate new insights.