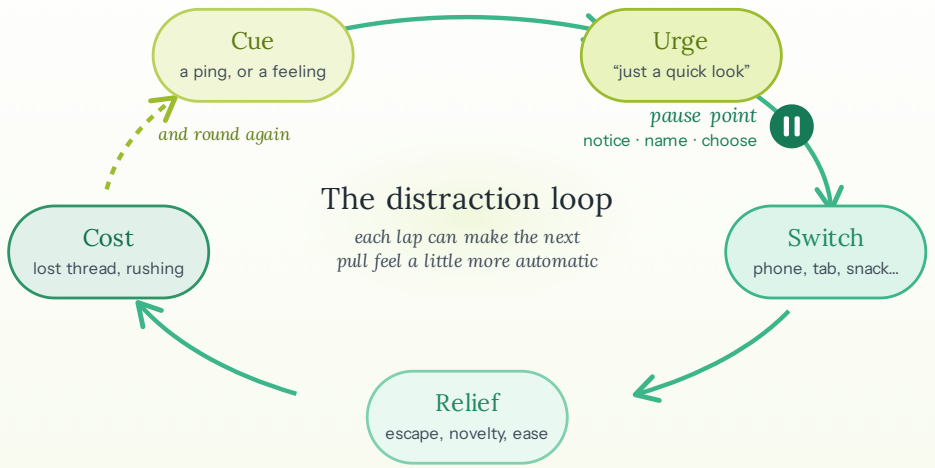
My Distraction Pattern

Noticing what pulls my attention away, what it does for me, and where I can pause

Everyone's attention drifts, and some drifting is useful. This form is for the drifts that cost you. Distraction often follows a loop: something pulls, an urge rises, we switch, we feel brief relief, and then pay for it later. Mapping your own loop, without judging it, is the first step towards choosing more often.



Switching away can ease boredom, stress or uncertainty for a moment (Sirois & Pychyl, 2013), and loops repeated in the same setting tend to become habits (Wood & Neal, 2007).

01 Know the pull

tick any that fit, add your own

Outside pulls (things around me)

- ○ Notifications
- ○ Messages
- ○ Email
- ○ Open tabs
- ○ People talking
- ○ Noise
- ○ Phone in sight
- ○ News alerts
- ○ _____

Inside pulls (feelings, thoughts, body states)

- ○ Boredom
- ○ Not knowing where to start
- ○ Worry
- ○ Feeling overwhelmed
- ○ Self-doubt
- ○ Tiredness
- ○ Hunger
- ○ Restlessness
- ○ Low mood
- ○ _____

My usual switches (what I reach for)

- ○ Scrolling
- ○ Checking messages
- ○ News
- ○ Videos
- ○ Snacks
- ○ Tidying
- ○ An easier task
- ○ Daydreaming
- ○ _____

My most familiar loop, in one sentence

"When I feel _____ while _____, I usually _____."

_____

_____

02 My distraction log

log a few loops as close to the moment as you can

When *day, time*	I was trying to...	The pull *outside or inside*	Feeling just before	What I switched to	How long	What it gave me	What it cost me	I paused *at least once*
		○ outside ○ inside						○
		○ outside ○ inside						○
		○ outside ○ inside						○
		○ outside ○ inside						○
		○ outside ○ inside						○
		○ outside ○ inside						○

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03 Spot my pattern

look back over your log after a few days

When it starts

tick the times the loop shows up most

Early	Morning	Midday	Afternoon	Evening	Late
○	○	○	○	○	○

And where I usually am:

My strongest pulls

outside and inside

What the switch does for me

what it lets me escape, avoid or feel

How much it gets in the way

of the things that matter to me, this week

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Most affected:

04 My plan for the loop

small changes, tested for a week

Change the setting

fewer cues means fewer pulls to resist

- ○ Phone in another room
- ○ Notifications off
- ○ One tab only
- ○ Set a focus block
- ○ Headphones
- ○ Clear the desk

If-then plans

link a likely moment to a specific action

If _____

then I will _____

If _____

then I will _____

At the pause point

the urge usually rises, peaks and passes

Notice
"There's the pull." One slow breath out.

Name
What am I feeling? Urge 0–10?

Choose
Back for five minutes, or a planned break.

05 My practice week

a quick tick at the end of each day

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
I set up my setting first	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I used an if-then plan or paused	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Loops I noticed (rough count)							
Longest stretch of focus							

06 Reflection

what did I learn?

What surprised me about my pattern

Bring to my next session

A note on the evidence. Mind-wandering is very common and, in one large experience-sampling study, was linked with lower mood in the moment; the study was correlational, and wandering can also support planning and creativity (Killingsworth & Gilbert, 2010). Interruptions may lead people to work faster but with more stress (Mark et al., 2008). If-then plans can help turn intentions into action (Gollwitzer, 1999). Persistent difficulty concentrating can be linked to sleep, mood, anxiety, ADHD, medication or health, so it is worth discussing with your clinician rather than putting it down to willpower.

SOURCES

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