

Concentration

Session 8

Overview

- Things that affect concentration
- How tinnitus affects concentration
- Strategies to improve your concentration

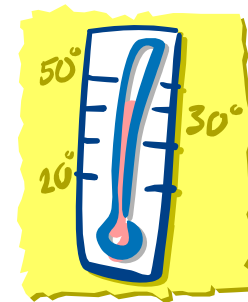
Concentration is Important

- Necessary to complete many tasks
- Inability to concentrate results in frustration and stress
- Good concentration will enable you to remember more



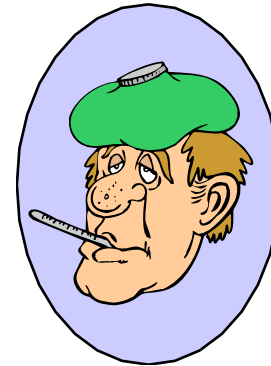
1. Things That Affect Concentration

- The environment
 - Noise
 - Distractions
 - Lighting
 - Temperature



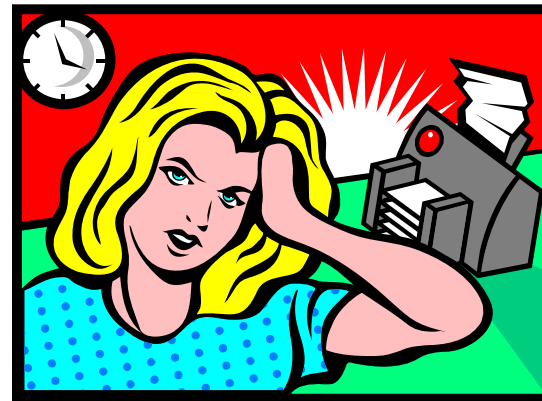
Things That Affect Concentration

- Your physical state
 - Hunger
 - Tiredness
 - Current health status



Things That Affect Concentration

- Your emotional state
 - Anxiety
 - Fear
 - Boredom



Your Concentration

- What problems with concentration do you have?
- How do you feel about your difficulties concentrating?



2. How Tinnitus Affects Concentration

- We perform best when we focus on one thing at a time
- We can multi-task, but we are less efficient
- When we focus attention on our tinnitus, it is harder to concentrate on other things

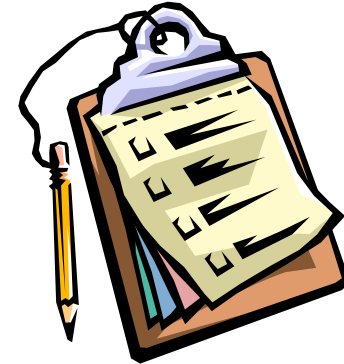


Effects of Tinnitus on Concentration

- Observe the effects of tinnitus on your concentration when you are doing simple or complex tasks.
- Simple tasks (e.g. filing) may not be stimulating enough – tinnitus fills in the gaps.
- Complex tasks (e.g. learning a new computer program) are more demanding – tinnitus less noticeable
- Effects can be different for each person

3. Strategies to Improve Concentration

- A. Eliminate distractions
- B. Adjust work habits
- C. Stay focused
- D. Consider task difficulty
- E. Decrease prominence of tinnitus
- F. Take control of your attention



A. Eliminate Distractions

- Choose a comfortable environment
- Eliminate unwanted noise
- Avoid hunger and tiredness
- Set aside a time for worrying or daydreaming



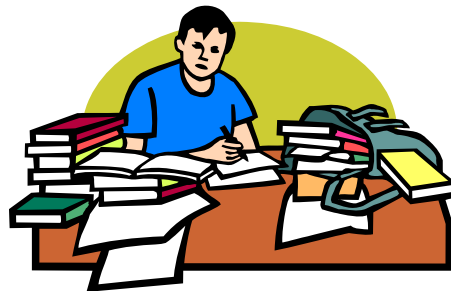
B. Adjust Work Habits



- Work in shorter time spans
- Set a realistic pace
- Take breaks as needed
- Reward yourself when task is complete

C. Stay Focused

- Actively participate
- Take notes
- Ask questions
- Repeat information
- Organize and categorize important points

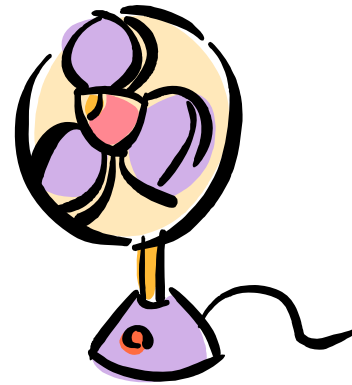


D. Consider Task Difficulty

- Try easy and difficult tasks
- Attempt to focus on a task for a brief period
 - Vary the amount of time spent on each task
 - Build up the time spent on each task
- Do not restrict yourself to simple tasks
 - Easier for tinnitus to intrude when task is less interesting
- Try more challenging tasks
 - Tinnitus may be less intrusive when more effort is put into the task or when task is more enjoyable

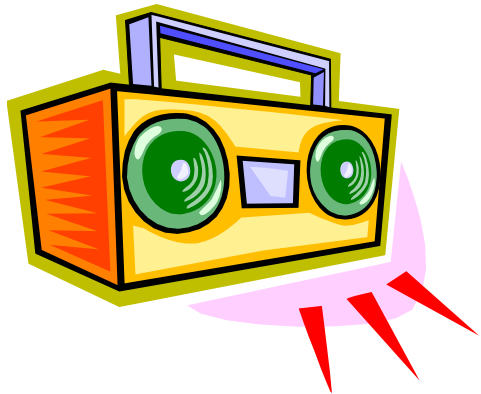
E. Decrease Prominence of Tinnitus

- Use background sound
 - CD player
 - Radio
 - Relaxing sound player
 - Fan, humidifier, etc
- For example, if you have difficulty concentrating at work, try playing background music or sounds



Decrease Prominence of Tinnitus

- Consider different sounds, including music
 - Choose soft pleasant sounds you enjoy
 - Music (calm, soothing, steady, classical, piano)
 - Nature sounds (waves, waterfalls, raindrops)
 - Broadband noise (‘ssshhh’)



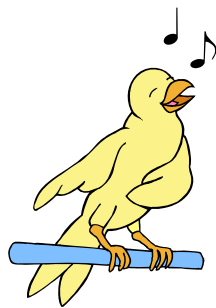
F. Take Control of Your Attention

- The focus of our attention is largely under voluntary control
- You can learn to control the focus of your attention under various conditions
- By bringing the focus of attention under control, tinnitus-related distress will be reduced at certain times



Attention Control Exercises

- Learn to switch attention from one stimulus (e.g. object, sensation, thought, activity) to another at will
- Allows you to refocus your attention from your tinnitus onto other stimuli, external or internal



Visual Example

1. Focus on a nearby object (e.g. pencil, book, etc)
2. Study that object
3. Now switch your attention to looking in the distance (e.g. out the window, down the hall, etc)
4. Switch back and forth between the two several times
5. Notice that you can choose which item you visually pay attention to while ignoring other things around you

Sound Example

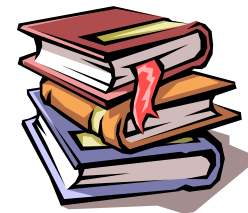
1. Listen for a prominent sound around you (e.g. talking, heater noise, etc)
2. Now listen to a different sound in the room
3. Continue to try and focus on certain sounds while ignoring others around you

Sound and Tinnitus Example

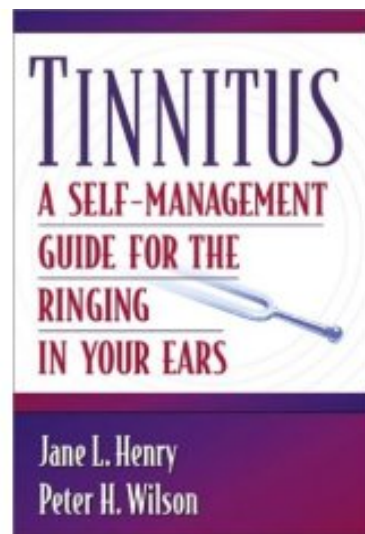
1. Pay attention to a sound in the room (e.g. background music, heater noise, etc)
2. Now switch your attention to listening to your tinnitus
3. Switch back to listening to the sound in the room and ignore your tinnitus
4. Practice paying attention to other sounds while ignoring your tinnitus

Sound and Reading Example

1. Read with noise or music in the background
2. Focus on your reading
3. Now focus on the noise or music
4. Switch your focus back to your reading
5. Continue to switch back and forth
6. Practice so you are able to pay attention to your reading while ignoring the noise or music

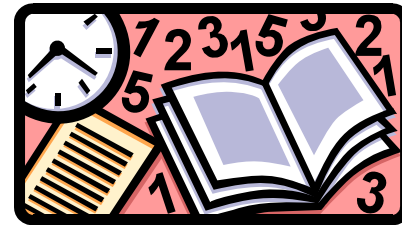


Consider reading books on attention and taking control of your attention, such as Henry and Wilson's *Tinnitus A Self-Management Guide for the Ringing in Your Ears*



Activities

- Utilize the strategies discussed to improve concentration
 - Eliminate distractions
 - Adjust work habits
 - Stay focused
 - Consider task difficulty
 - Decrease prominence of tinnitus
 - Take control of your attention



Activities

- Remember to use background sound to make tinnitus less prominent
- Practice attention control exercises
 - Visual
 - Sound
 - Sound plus tinnitus
 - Sound plus reading