

Tinnitus Activities Treatment

Concentration Session

Concentration 1

Overview

1. Things that affect concentration
2. How tinnitus affects concentration
3. Strategies to improve your concentration

Concentration 2

Here, we address three ways to improve concentration:

- Providing information
- Decreasing the prominence of tinnitus
- Increasing attention to the task at hand

Concentration is Important

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

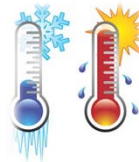
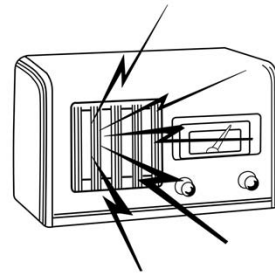


Concentration 3

- Concentration is defined as the ability to focus the mind on a particular problem or activity.
- An inability to concentrate can be frustrating and stressful.
- Good concentration will allow you to remember more.

1. Things That Affect Concentration

- The environment:
 - Noise
 - Distractions
 - Temperature
 - Lighting



Concentration 4

- There are many things that affect concentration, including those in our environment.
 - Background noise
 - Auditory or visual distractions (radio, TV)
 - Lighting
 - Temperature – too hot or cold

Things That Affect Concentration



- Your physical state:
 - Hunger
 - Fatigue
 - Current health status



- There are many things that affect concentration, including our physical state.
 - Hunger/thirst
 - Fatigue
 - Current health status

Things That Affect Concentration



- Your emotional state:
 - Anxiety
 - Fear
 - Boredom



- There are many things that affect concentration, including our emotional state:
 - Anxiety
 - Fear
 - boredom

Your Concentration

- What problems with concentration do you have?
- How do you feel about not being able to concentrate?



- Everyone can be distracted by stimuli. Some distracting stimuli are
 - Annoying
 - Fearful
 - Competing with the desired target
 - Loud
 - Unpredictable
 - Uncontrollable
- What problems do you have?
- How do you feel when having difficulty focusing?

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 to our tinnitus, it is harder to concentrate on other things

Concentration 8

- Not all people are distracted by tinnitus
- However, if it is distracting, focusing attention to tinnitus will make it more difficult to concentrate on particular tasks or other problems.

Effects of Tinnitus on Concentration

- Observe the effects of tinnitus on your concentration for:
 - Simple tasks (filing)
 - Complex tasks (learning new computer game)
- Simple tasks may not be stimulating enough--tinnitus fills in gaps
- Complex tasks are more demanding—tinnitus is less noticeable
- Effects vary person to person

Concentration 9

3. Strategies to Improve Concentration



1. Interpret tinnitus as not important
2. Eliminate distractions
3. Stay focused
4. Adjust work habits
5. Decrease prominence of tinnitus
6. Take control of your attention

Concentration 10

- Fortunately, there are many strategies to improving concentration.

1. Interpret Tinnitus as Not Important

- Tinnitus is not threatening your health or hearing
- Tinnitus is the result of increased spontaneous activity
- If tinnitus is important, it will be monitored
- When you decide tinnitus is not important, you can begin to not attend to it



Concentration 11

- Discuss the fears patients have about their tinnitus.
- Dispel fears with a thorough discussion about the mechanisms of tinnitus, and its causes.
- A good understanding of the mechanisms and causes of tinnitus can help people feel less threatened about tinnitus.

2. Eliminate Distractions

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



- Changing the environment can help to facilitate better concentration.

3. Stay Focused

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



Concentration 13

- When concentration is challenged by tinnitus, these tips will help you to stay focused and attentive to a particular task:
 - Actively participate in conversation or problem solving
 - Take notes on the topic
 - Ask questions and stay engaged
 - Repeat information if you lose focus momentarily
 - Organize and categorize points to retrieve them later

4. Adjust Work Habits



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

Concentration 14

- Another strategy is to modify how you approach tasks when you are having difficulty concentrating
 - For example, work in shorter time spans of 20-40 minutes, taking breaks when needed.
 - For a complex task requiring focused and prolonged concentration, reduce it to smaller tasks than can be done in shorter periods of time

Consider task difficulty

- 1 Consider simple and complex tasks
- 2 Attempt to focus on a task for a brief period
 - Vary the amount of time spent on task
 - Build up time spent on each task
- 3 Do not restrict yourself to simple tasks
 - Easier for tinnitus to fill in gaps
- 4 Try more challenging tasks
 - Tinnitus may be less intrusive when you have to concentrate more

Concentration 15

Do not restrict yourself to a certain task difficulty. Consider changing from a simple task to a more complex one (or vice versa) to see what the effect is on your concentration. Some tasks might be better or worse for concentration at any given time.

5. Decrease Prominence of Tinnitus

- Use background sound in the environment



- If you have difficulty concentrating at work, try playing background music or sounds

Concentration 16

- Various sound therapies can decrease the prominence of tinnitus and reduce its distracting nature.
 - CDs
 - TV/radio
 - Relaxing sound player
 - Fan, humidifier
 - Smartphone app
- We recommend partial masking, with either wearable or nonwearable devices, to help

Decrease Prominence of Tinnitus

- Choose a soft, pleasant sound you enjoy
 - Nature sounds (waves, rain)
 - Music (calm, soothing, steady, classical, piano)
 - Broadband noise ("ssshhh")



- Listening to recorded material, such as CDs, nature sounds, and music can help provide background sound

6. Take Control of Your Attention

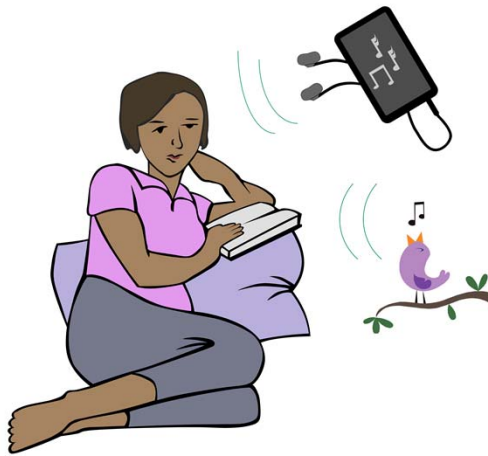
- The focus of our attention is largely under voluntary control
- You can learn to control the focus of your attention under various conditions
- By bringing the focus of attention under control, tinnitus-related distress will be reduced at certain times



Concentration 18

- Taking control of your attention is something you can learn to do. This is called attention diversion and is applied to help tinnitus patients.
- Distress caused by tinnitus will be reduced as you learn to control the focus of attention away from tinnitus.


Attention Control Exercises



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

Concentration 19

- Patients practice refocusing their attention from one stimulus to another.
- Being aware of external stimuli can help divert attention from tinnitus and onto other tasks.
- We will start with a visual example, and then introduce a sound example



Visual Attention Example

1. Focus on a nearby object (pen, book)
2. Study that object
3. Now switch your attention to looking in the distance (e.g. out the window, down the hall)
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

Concentration 20

Attention Diversion - visual example

Sound Attention Example

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



Concentration 21

Attention Diversion – sound example

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



Concentration 22

Attention Diversion - sound example using patient's own tinnitus

Sound and Reading Example

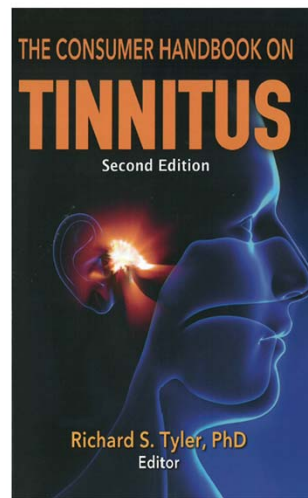
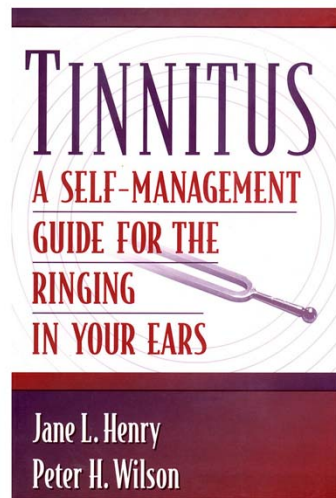


1. Read with noise or music in the background
2. Focus on your reading
3. Now focus on the noise or music
4. Switch your focus back to your reading
5. Continue to switch back and forth
6. Practice so you are able to pay attention to your reading while ignoring the noise or music

Concentration 23

Attention Diversion – sound and visual/comprehension example

Self-help books on Attention Control Techniques



Concentration 24

Activities

- Utilize the strategies discussed to improve concentration
 1. Interpret tinnitus as not important
 2. Eliminate distractions
 3. Stay focused
 4. Adjust work habits
 5. Decrease prominence of tinnitus
 6. Take control of your attention



Concentration 25

Activities

- Remember to use background sound to make tinnitus less prominent
- Practice attention control exercises
 1. Visual
 2. Sound
 3. Sound plus tinnitus
 4. Sound plus reading



Concentration 26