
Focussing back on Study when pre-occupied with a “crisis”

It's not that a crisis is unimportant, and it can be very compelling, but there are very few crises that require 24 hour a day attention. In the meantime, other areas of your life and your goals for them are also important, such as staying healthy, maintaining your relationships, and completing your degree. In fact, turning your attention to those goals, and limiting the time and energy for the problem to the minimum necessary, can actually help in managing the crisis.

Here are some tips specifically for focussing back on study, to help you through whatever situation has captured your time, energy and mental space.

1. **Shorten study periods**, but keep at it till the period is finished. Your concentration span may not be what it used to be, but keep gently bringing your mind back to the study till the time is over. It helps train the mind to go where you want it to go.
2. **Have specific goals for each period**, the more specific and do-able, the better: get the introduction written, read that article and make a summary, listen to a tape, photocopy some material, etc
3. **Be active**: write notes as you read, interact with the material consciously, discuss the issues with your colleagues
4. **Pick the time of day** that's easier for you to study, usually the time you are more accustomed to study.
5. **Attend lectures, tutes and labs**. That time is structured for you – use it.
6. **Study with someone**. Just having someone in the room, even if they are studying something else, can help you keep focus.
7. **Schedule time for the crisis**. Knowing that you will give yourself time to process the crisis will help you to focus on your study now. Really contain the crisis to the scheduled times.
8. **Limit talking about it**. It's tempting to talk to all and sundry, over and over about the problem. That can keep it alive in your mind past a useful stage. When enough is enough, stop.
9. **Remind yourself of your goals**. Your other goals may not seem very compelling in the midst of a crisis, but they were once and will be again. Don't lose sight of them. If it helps, picture what might happen if you neglect your other goals and what might happen when you reach them.

Study is an area of your life that you **can** control and in doing that you can put yourself into a more resourceful mental state, so that when you return to processing the problem or the crisis, you may see things with a bit more clarity, with a bit more sense that you can get through it.

Speaking with a qualified mental health professional might be helpful as well.