

# **The War on Your Attention!**

**A Companion Booklet  
to Episode 2  
of  
THE KAREN SCHAAL  
PODCAST**

**Created by Karen Schaal  
A Science and Gratitude Approach  
Powered by People Owned Psychology™**



## Welcome!

This booklet is part of the Brilliance Series, a five-part collection accompanying Episodes 1–5 of The Karen Schaal Podcast.

Each booklet is designed to help you reconnect with your innate brilliance, not through inspiration alone, but through tools rooted in biology, psychology, and gratitude-based science.

In this edition, you'll explore simple, science-backed practices that focus on the quiet power of reclaiming your attention and bringing it back to what matters most: your well-being, your clarity, and your personal brilliance.

Let it settle.  
This is your line in the sand.



## **The War on Your Attention!**

In a world built to distract you, outside forces fight to shape what you see, think, and care about, often at the expense of your peace, your time, and your well-being.

Distraction isn't just noise.  
It's a theft -of clarity, of energy, and of connection.  
And the cost is personal.

This booklet is an invitation to take your attention back.  
Through simple, intentional practices,  
you'll begin to return your focus to what matters:  
your life, your relationships, and the things that restore you.

The infographic below highlights just a few ways  
your body and brain support focus automatically,  
and in service of your well-being.

# DID YOU KNOW?

**YOUR ATTENTION ISN'T DISTRACTED.  
IT'S BEING DESIGNED.**

## HIJACKED BY: CONSTANT TASK-SWITCHING

Your brain takes 23 minutes to refocus after a distraction.

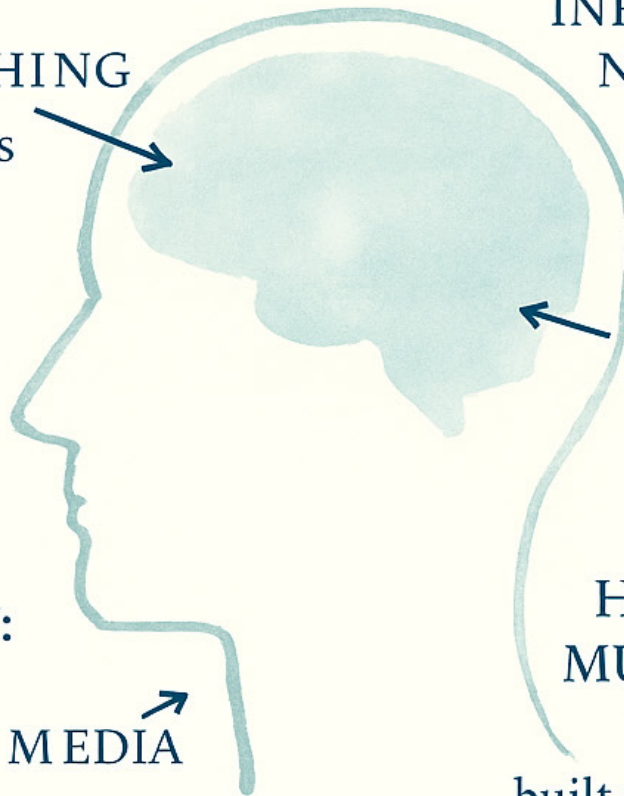
*Gloria Mark,  
University of  
California, Irvine*

## HIJACKED BY: EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS IN MEDIA

Outrage and fear are used to hold your gaze longer—it's a known attention-grabbing tactic.

## DEFAULT MODE NETWORK

This network supports reflection and insight—but it requires quiet and pause to function.



## HIJACKED BY: INFINITE SCROLL+ NOTIFICATIONS

Every ding, like, or swipe triggers a mini dopamine release—creating a habit loop.

## HIJACKED BY: MULTITASKING

Humans aren't built to multitask—we just switch rapidly and lose efficiency.

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# Reconnecting with Your Brilliance

These practices are designed to help you reconnect with yourself. You'll find them throughout the Brilliance Series, and you can incorporate them into your routine in ways that feel natural.

Use them one at a time, or combine them as they resonate with you. Let them evolve with you. Let them remind you of your brilliance.

1

## Breathe

A Moment  
of Noticing



2

## Move

Awareness  
in Action



3

## Reflect

A Quiet  
Discovery



4

## Observe

Intelligence  
in the Environment



5

## Appreciate

Gratitude  
as Connection



# Breathe



Before you give in  
to a distraction - pause.  
Let yourself take one full breath.  
Then ask yourself:  
“Is this where I want my  
attention to go?”

This breath doesn't need  
to fix anything.  
It simply opens space.

Space to hear yourself again.  
Space to remember . . .  
what's important.

Space to notice that you  
have a choice,  
even in small moments.

A choice to turn your attention  
toward what truly matters.

Within that breath,  
the moment returns to you  
clear, steady, and fully yours.

# Move



We all find ourselves lost in distraction— driving without thinking, scrolling without end, unending conversations.

Today, catch one of those moments. Pause. Shift in your seat. Stretch your fingers. Take a slow breath and move with intention however you can.

You're not trying to fix anything. You're simply interrupting the momentum long enough, to notice what you're giving your attention to.

This small act helps you come back to the moment, to what matters.

This is the beginning of you reclaiming your attention.

Expanding the Mind and Growing the Heart

# Reflect



Give yourself a few quiet minutes.  
Sit with a pen and paper.

Ask gently, without judgment:  
“Where does my attention go when  
I’m not paying attention?”

Write freely. Let it spill out.  
You might find distractions  
that don’t feel like choices.  
Pulls you didn’t notice.  
Habits that run  
without your permission.  
Things you reach for when you’re  
tired, unsure, or overstimulated.

You’re not trying to fix anything.  
You just want to see.

In a world constantly trying  
to steer your focus,  
this is your moment  
to notice what’s steering you  
and whether you want  
to keep going that way.

This is how you begin to reclaim  
what’s been quietly taken.

# Observe



Throughout your day,  
notice what calls to you.  
Keep a running list,  
mental or written.

Notifications. Chimes.  
Conversations.  
The urge to check.  
The need to scroll.  
A wandering thought.

You're not trying to  
eliminate distractions -  
just meet them  
with awareness.

At the end of the day review.  
Which pulls felt urgent?  
Which ones left you feeling  
more whole, more hollow?

This awareness is how  
attention begins  
to come home.

# Appreciate



In a world fighting to keep your attention, gratitude asks something different.

It asks you to return to what's quietly valuable. To what nourishes, instead of demands.

Today, choose one thing you often overlook.  
A hand you hold.  
A quiet moment.  
A task you've made your own.

Pause for 30 seconds and truly take it in.  
Not to share it.  
Not to post it.  
Just to notice it.

This is appreciation.  
A soft but steady reclaiming of what's already yours to treasure.

Expanding the Mind and Growing the Heart

# Why These Practices Work

The practices in this booklet are rooted in evidence-based research.

Science continues to confirm that the five areas of focus in this booklet:

- intentional breath
- movement
- reflection
- observation
- appreciation

can support emotional regulation, cognitive clarity, physical healing, and deeper connection.

The following pages offer a deeper look at what is occurring in your body and mind during each of the recommended practices.

Each practice is paired with a relevant research study, offering deeper insight into how and why these simple exercises can create meaningful shifts in your self-awareness, enhance your well-being, and influence how you see and relate to the world around you.

# Why These Practices Work

## 1. Breathe - Regulation for Refocused Attention

In a world wired to fragment your focus, intentional breathing creates a pause point; a way to shift from reactivity to responsiveness.

Slow, conscious breaths quiet the stress response, settle the nervous system, and help transition your body out of fight-or-flight.

Even a single deep breath can interrupt distraction, regulate emotion, and bring your attention back to what matters.

Recent research shows that brief breath work practices, especially those with extended exhales, can be even more effective than meditation for improving mood and calming physiological arousal.

The science is clear: your breath is one of the fastest, most accessible tools for regaining clarity and reclaiming your attention.

### Research

Balban, M. Y., Neri, E., Kogon, M. M., Weed, L., Nouriani, B., Jo, B., Holl, G., Zeitzer, J. M., Spiegel, D., & Huberman, A. D. (2023).

Brief structured respiration practices enhance mood and reduce physiological arousal. *Cell reports. Medicine*, 4(1),

# Why These Practices Work

## 2. Move – Disrupting Distraction Through Motion

When you move, especially after long periods of sitting, you disrupt the cycle of mental fog and distraction.

Even short movement breaks, such as standing, stretching, or walking, boosts blood flow to brain regions responsible for executive function - the set of mental skills that help you focus attention, filter distractions, and shift gears with intention, rather than impulsively.

By tuning into your body, you interrupt the loop of unconscious distraction, quiet mental clutter, and return to the moment with greater clarity and control. A single intentional movement, can help you shift from scattered to centered, anytime you choose.

### Research

Byun, K., Hyodo, K., Suwabe, K., Ochi, G., Sakairi, Y., Kato, M., Dan, I., & Soya, H. (2014). Positive effect of acute mild exercise on executive function via arousal-related prefrontal activations: an fNIRS study. *NeuroImage*, 98, 336–345.

# Why These Practices Work

## 3. Reflect – Reclaiming Identity Through Awareness

In a world full of comparison and constant noise, taking time to reflect helps you tune back into your own values, and what's actually true for you.

Quiet journaling or introspection reconnects you to your inner self and activates a network in the brain called the default mode network (DMN); a group of regions that become active when your mind turns inward rather than staying task-focused.

Engaging the DMN allows your brain to process experiences, organize memories, imagine the future, and make sense of your identity and relationships.

This kind of reflection helps you notice where your attention's been going and gives you a chance to point it somewhere more meaningful.

### Research

Luo, W., Liu, B., Tang, Y., Huang, J., & Wu, J. (2024). Rest to Promote Learning: A Brain Default Mode Network Perspective. *Behavioral sciences* (Basel, Switzerland), 14(4), 349. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs14040349>

# Why These Practices Work

## 4. Observe – Restoring Attention Through Environment

In a world full of noise, your ability to focus gets depleted. Constant input, decisions, and stimulation wear down the systems that help you stay present and think clearly.

But your body has a built-in way to recover.

Stepping outside, looking out a window, or even tending to a plant can reduce cognitive fatigue and help you reset.

Nature doesn't compete for your attention, it helps restore it.

According to Attention Restoration Theory, natural environments help restore mental clarity by gently engaging your attention, without demanding anything from you.

This gives the parts of your brain responsible for focused effort, a chance to rest and recover.

This isn't passive—it's science.

Noticing what's natural helps your attention recover—so you can return more steady, more focused, and more in control.

### Research

Berman, M. G., Jonides, J., & Kaplan, S. (2008). The cognitive benefits of interacting with nature. *Psychological Science*, 19(12), 1207–1212. <https://doi-org.erl.lib.byu.edu/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2008.02225.x>

# Why These Practices Work

## 5. Appreciate – Redirecting Attention Toward What Matters

Gratitude gives your attention a place to rest. Noticing something small, such as a smile, a quiet moment, pulls your focus away from what's missing to what is here. Gratitude supports emotional regulation and reward by shifting your mindset away from threat or scarcity, and toward a sense of possibility, safety, and meaning. That shift also increases emotional clarity, your ability to notice, name, and navigate what you're feeling.

Gratitude builds resilience by helping you stay grounded during stress, recover more quickly from challenges, and remember what's still good - even in hard moments. Over time, these small shifts help your mind focus on the meaningful instead of the distracting.

Gratitude isn't just pleasant—it's directional.

It's choosing where you place your awareness.

And over time, it shapes what you see, value, and pursue.

### Research

Davis, D. E., Choe, E., Meyers, J., Wade, N., Varjas, K., Gifford, A., Quinn, A., Hook, J. N., Van Tongeren, D. R., Griffin, B. J., & Worthington, E. L. (2016). Thankful for the little things: A meta-analysis of gratitude interventions. *Journal of counseling psychology*, 63(1), 20–31. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000107>

# Congratulations!

If you made it here,  
you've done more than just listen.  
You noticed the noise.  
You questioned the messages.  
You made space to hear yourself again.  
That is powerful.

In a world that profits from your disconnection.  
you chose presence, you chose reflection.  
you chose you.

Whether this is your first time tuning back in  
or a continuation of your personal work,  
thank you for walking this path with me.

Keep returning to what's true for you.  
Your attention is yours to protect.  
Your identity is yours to reclaim.  
You are not behind.  
You are becoming.

# Stay Connected

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X (Twitter): @KarenSchaal

## **About the Author**

Karen Schaal is the founder of People Owned Psychology™, a science- and gratitude-based platform devoted to expanding the mind and growing the heart. Her approach helps people embrace their personal brilliance by developing awareness - of themselves and the psychological processes that shape our experience. Karen believes that when we make intentional choices toward goodness, by seeking out the good in ourselves, in others, and in the world, we grow into the fullness of who we were meant to be.