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The Science of Health *and Happiness* *for young people*©



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Week 2

Developing Attention & Focus

Dr Pádraic Dunne

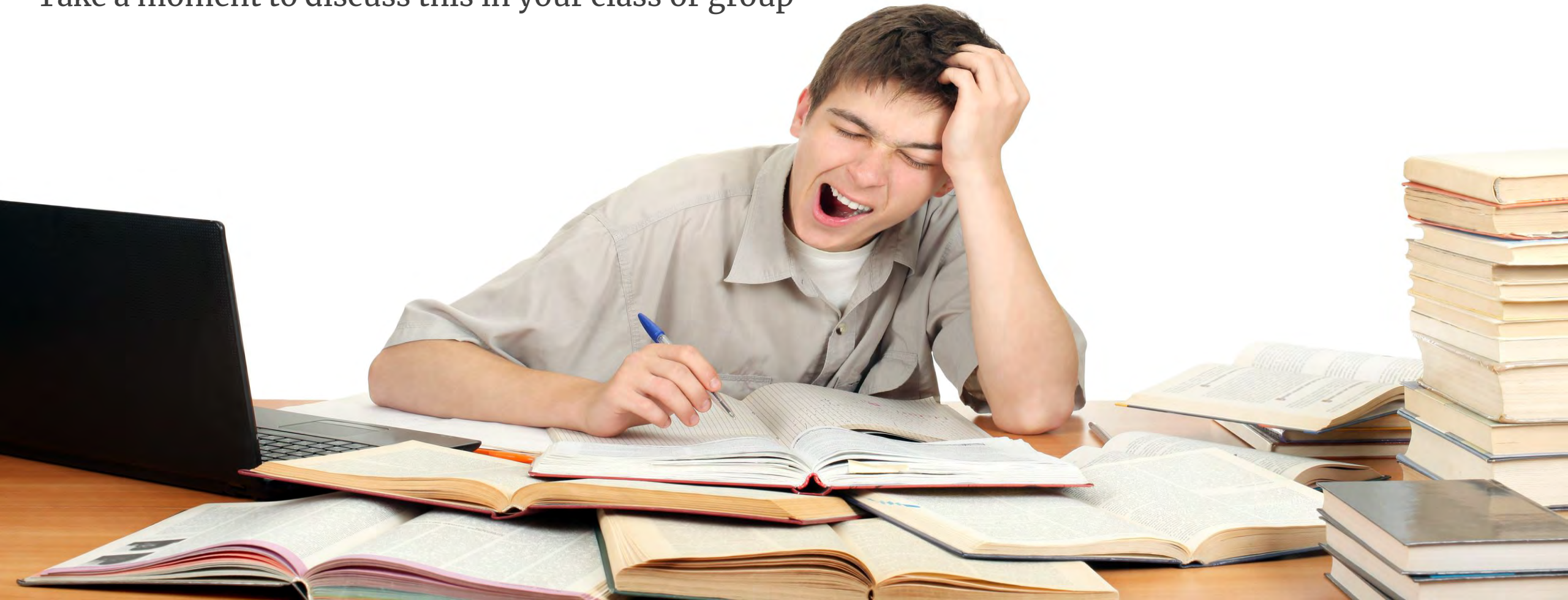



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Do you ever find it hard to focus or pay attention?

Perhaps when doing homework, working on projects or in class?

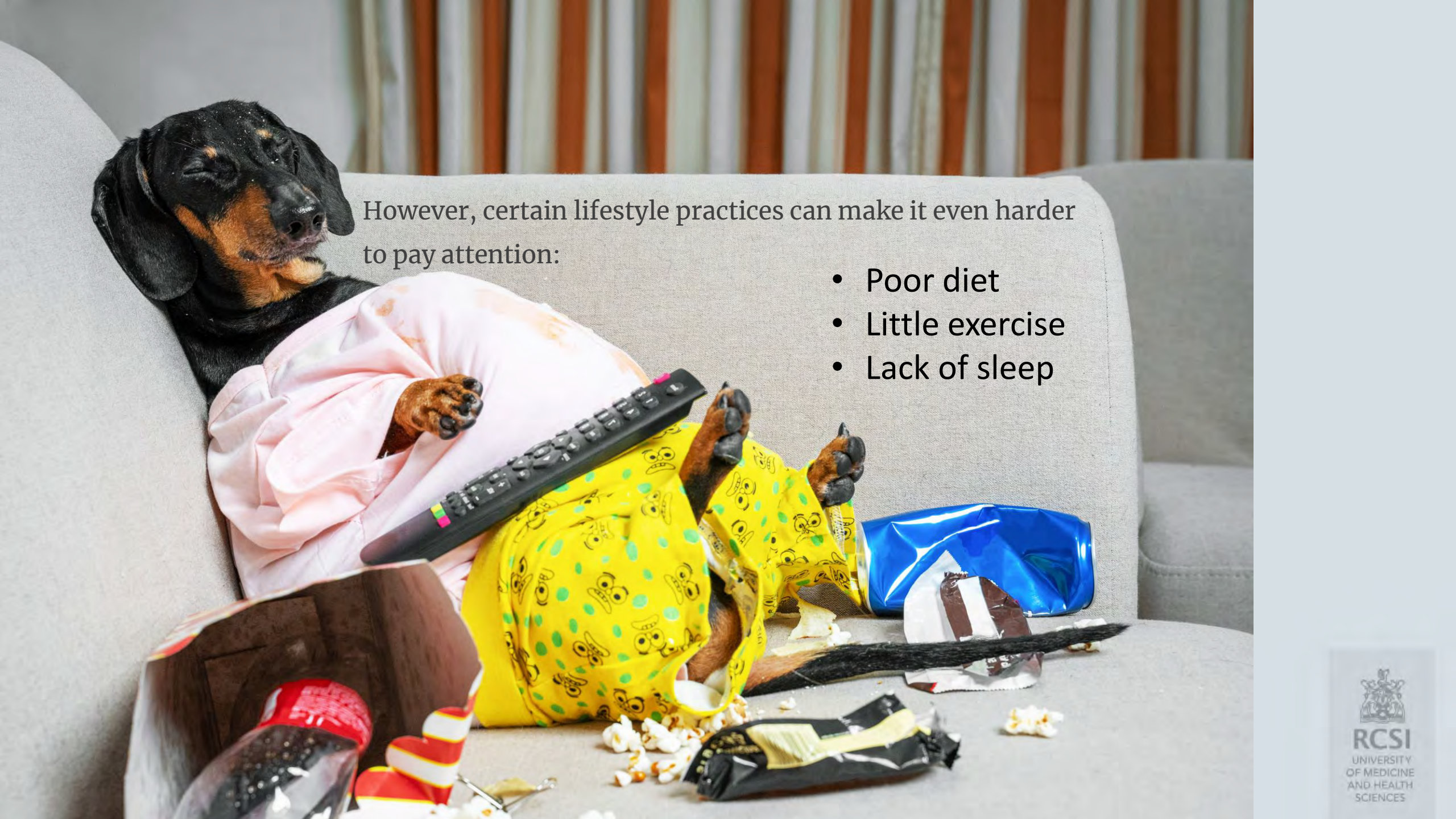
Take a moment to discuss this in your class or group



The image features a large, detailed brain at the top, which serves as the canopy of a tree. A dark silhouette of a person stands at the base of the tree, holding a watering can and pouring water onto the ground. The background is a smooth gradient from a light yellow at the bottom to a dark purple at the top, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall theme is the high energy requirement of the brain.

Our brains need a lot
of energy as they
develop

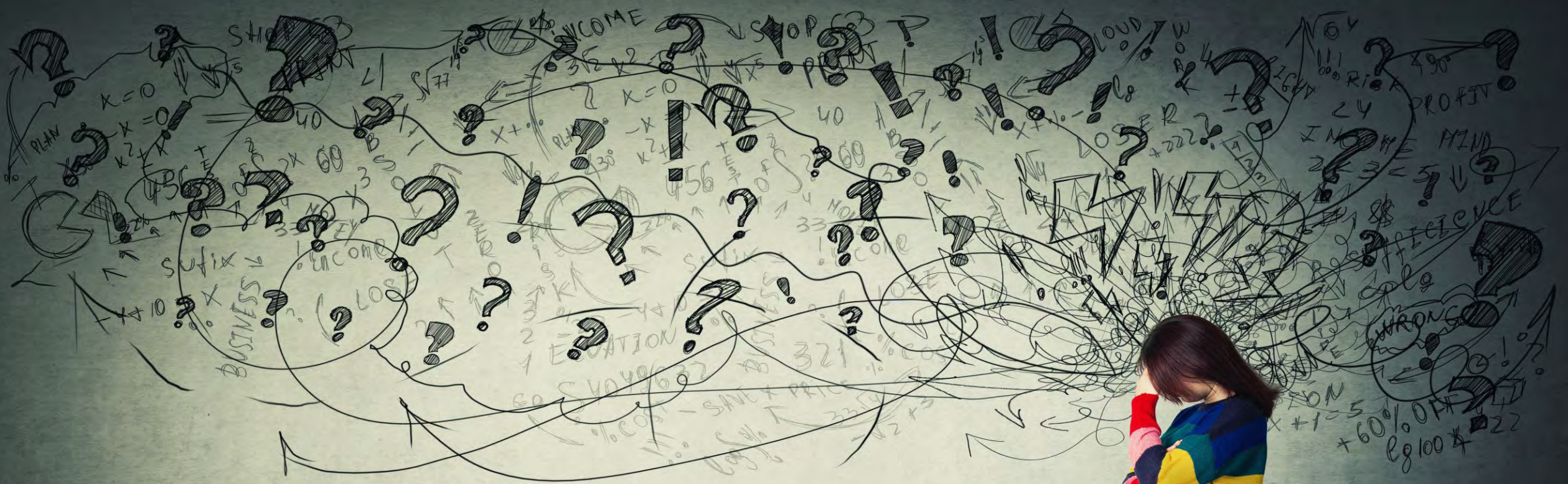
This can sometimes make it
hard to focus and pay
attention

A dachshund dog is lying on a light grey couch, appearing to be asleep. The dog is wearing a light pink long-sleeved shirt and bright yellow pants with a cartoonish pattern of faces and green polka dots. A black remote control is resting on its chest. The dog's front paws are visible, holding the remote. On the floor in front of the couch, there is a large brown paper bag, a blue bag, a red and white striped bag, and several pieces of popcorn and other food debris. The background shows a window with vertical blinds.

However, certain lifestyle practices can make it even harder to pay attention:

- Poor diet
- Little exercise
- Lack of sleep





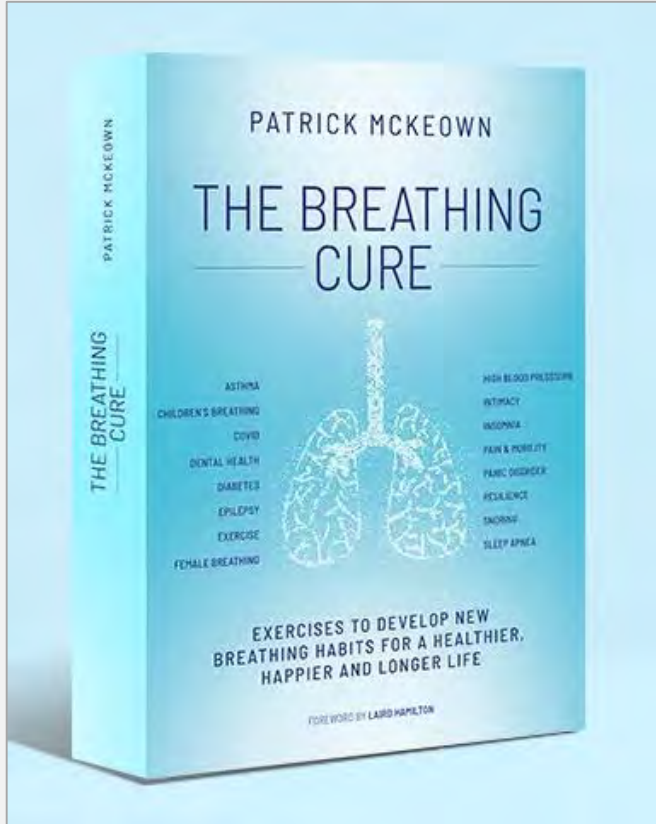
Stress and pressure can also make it hard to focus

Stress can make us become forgetful; we can find it hard to remember facts, figures and even names

Can you think of the types of stress that make it hard to focus sometimes?
Has this ever happened to you?
Take a few minutes to discuss in your class or group

Practices to help you focus and strengthen your attention

1. Breathe



[Patrick McKeown Ted Talk on the importance of healthy breathing](#)

Breathe through your nose only!

- Breathe light (gentle)
- Breathe slow
- Breathe low (into your belly)
- **5 seconds in; 5 seconds out**

Practice this before you start your homework and every 15 minutes during your study period

Practice it when you feel nervous



Healthy breathing – in for 5; out for 5

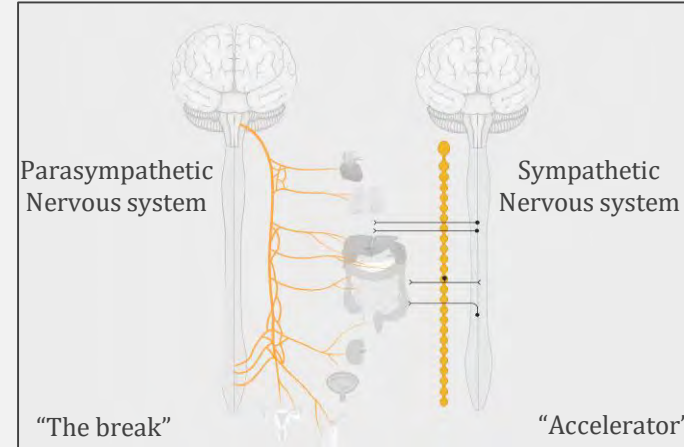
Clean, simple
guided breath pacer



Download: *Awesome Breathing*
from the Apple App Store or Google
Play

OR

Try practicing using this website:
xhalr.com



Why does this work?
The autonomic nervous system

- When you inhale, you activate the accelerator
- When you exhale, you put the break on

Try it now!

Meditate to sharpen your focus and attention

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OTBSports SOCCER HURLING FOOTBALL **RUGBY** GOLF RACING



RUGBY

HOW MINDFULNESS HELPS JOHNNY SEXTON THROUGH THE BAD DAYS

Arthur James O'Dea [@ArthurJamesOD](#)
14:56 30 JAN 2021


[LINK](#)

Soccer Players Who Do Yoga and Meditation

Yoga and Meditation have helped many athletes. These footballers do yoga and meditation to stay physically and mentally fit, calm and healthy.

1. Lionel Messi


[LINK](#)



The New York Times

The Latest in Military Strategy: Mindfulness

[LINK](#)




MM
MAGAZINE

FEATURES MIND + BODY ▾ LIVING ▾ PITCH PERF

Mind + Body

WE JUST SPENT 20 MINUTES MEDITATING WITH LADY GAGA

written by Mental Movement Magazine | October 2, 2017



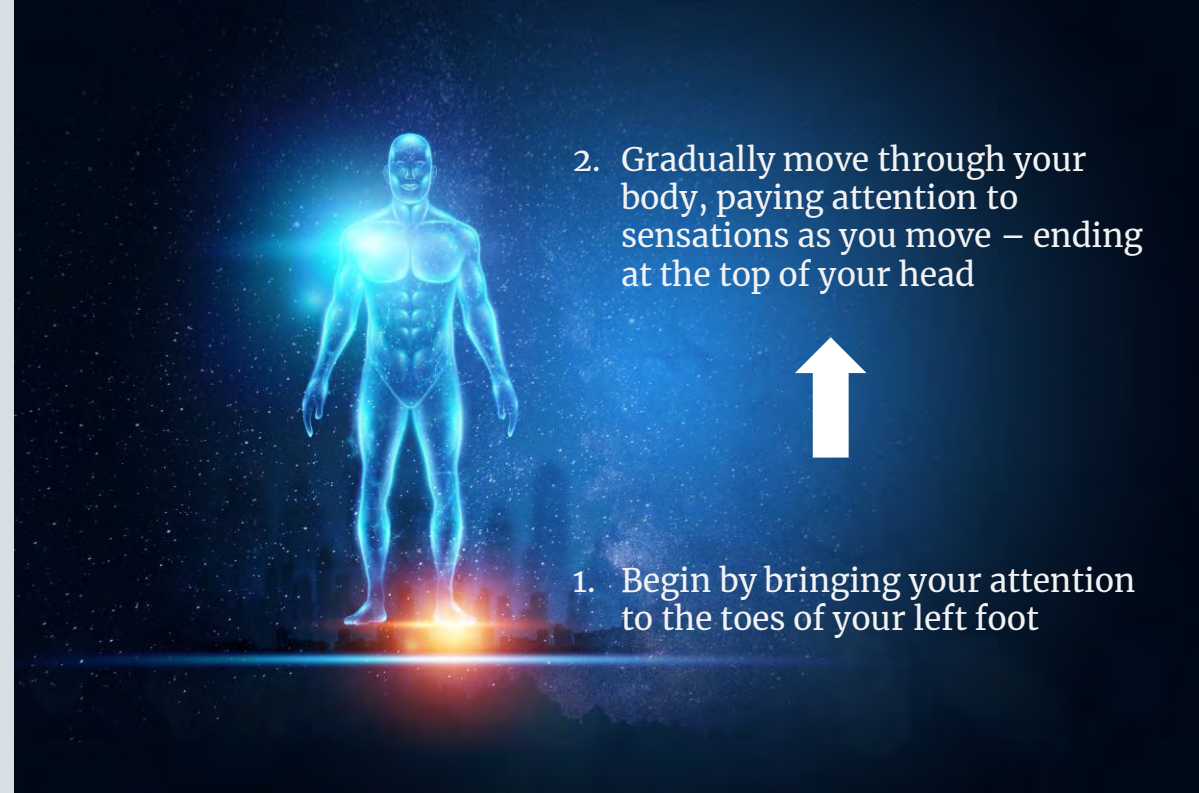
[LINK](#)



Meditation is not about stopping thinking

- It is about becoming aware of your thoughts, mind and your body
- Meditation can be hard and isn't easy – but it is worth it!
- If you are very upset – its probably not a good idea to meditate – focus on your body instead e.g. exercise, sport, art, music, singing, being in nature and with animals

The body scan meditation



Practice the body scan meditation



Practice:

- Before your homework
- If you feel angry or upset
- If you are experiencing pain or discomfort in the body

[Link to the practice](#)

Other important ways to strengthen
focus and attention:

sleep, good food, exercise

RULES OF HEALTHY SLEEP



Sleep hygiene



PICK CONSISTENT SLEEP
AND WAKE TIMES



RELAX BEFORE BEDTIME



AVOID STRESSORS
BEFORE BEDTIME



KEEP ELECTRONICS
OUT OF BEDROOM



BLOCK OUT ALL LIGHT



DROWN OUT ALL
UNWANTED NOISE



TRY HERBAL TEA
WITH VALERIAN ROOT



AVOID CAFFEINE
CLOSE TO BEDTIME



DO A BODY SCAN

How many of
these things do
you do each night
before bed?

Discuss



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Eat good food often, if you can
– *low sugar*
– *limit processed food*

Calculate how many minutes of exercise you get each day during the week?

Discuss



[Check out the Irish HSE guide on exercise and for a deeper explanation of recommended exercise per day](#)

2020 World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines call for children and adolescents to accumulate at least an **average of 60 min of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity per day** (mostly aerobic physical activity). They also recommend that vigorous physical activities and muscle and bone strengthening activities should each be incorporated at least 3 days per week.

Your homework for this week

- Practice healthy breathing before, during and after homework each evening
- Practice breathing before each class with your teacher – discuss what it feels like
- Practice the body scan in class with your teacher and at least once at home – discuss what it feels like
- Write out your personal plan for sleep – hygiene; discuss in class
- Review your SMART habit check-list from last week

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Thank you



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