

Inner Peace University - Module 5, Lesson 2

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[00:00:00] You'll probably remember way back in module two when we talked about the importance of managing attention as a way to counter negativity bias. Well, in this module, we're also working with attention in a slightly different way-to counter attention deficit. So let's take a look in depth at what attention deficit really is.

As a quick reminder, when we talk about attention, we're talking about a very specific aspect of mind. The definition we're using is that attention is the perceptual agency that is conscious of objects seen, heard, tasted, felt, smelled, and thought- that is, all objects that you can be aware of. Another way to think of it is attention is the part of you that is aware.

In any given moment, [00:01:00] there's a multitude of things that I can be aware of or place my attention on. I can place my attention on a thought or I could place my attention on a house, or I can place my attention on the sound of some music or on the smell of brewing coffee. But no matter what I place my attention on, we want to think of attention as the perceiver. That is, the one that is aware. The thing that is aware of my experience.

Thoughts on the other hand are objects that can be perceived. I can place my attention on a thought, but I can also place my attention on something else. So when we think about thoughts, we're really just thinking about different objects we can be aware of.

And in this lesson for attention deficit, no surprise here, we're interested in managing attention itself. So we [00:02:00] have attention, the part of you that is aware.

Let's talk a little bit about what we mean by a deficit. The definition of a deficit is a deficiency, a lack, a shortage in amount or in quality. And in this case, we're not talking about a lack or a shortage. We're talking about a very specific kind of deficiency. So attention deficit is a deficiency in the part of you that is aware, but as I've already said, it's a specific kind of deficit. So let's take a look at that.

When we were talking about negativity bias back in module number two, we talk about the problem being where we focused our attention. So if I were in a sea of positive things, my attention has a tendency to focus on the one thing [00:03:00] that's not going well, this is classic definition of negativity bias. And so in that case, we wanted to shift attention onto something that was more positive or uplifting rather than onto something that was negative or depressing, especially in those moments when it's not doing us any good to focus on that negative thing.

Now, when we talk about attention deficit, it's a different kind of problem. The problem here is not where we place our attention, but it's how frequently we focus. How frequently we think of it as change the channel. Now, most of us will recognize this by this acronym, ADD. Or we could also say attention deficit disorder. Now the bad news of attention deficit disorder, now don't necessarily think about this as a medical condition just yet, but the

consequence of [00:04:00] not being able to route your attention on one thing is pretty severe.

The fact is that it causes us mountains of optional misery and we'll talk about exactly how it does that here shortly. But here's the good news is that this attention deficit disorder that most people talk about really might be better termed as attention management disorder or AMD instead of ADD.

Meaning that it's really not a deficiency or a deficit that is biological in nature, it more has to do with the fact that we have abdicated our responsibility to deliberately manage our attention. And because attention hasn't been managed, it hasn't been trained, it seems to just be the out of control. And the consequences of course we've already talked about is optional [00:05:00] stress, anxiety and overwhelm. To be clear, this is not to say that ADD is not a thing that is not a bonafide condition, but it is to say that in the vast majority of cases where people believe themselves to have ADD, it is much more likely to be AMD or attention management disorder than it is any kind of biological condition.

But because we're really not talking about ADD or attention deficit disorder in the vast majority of cases, but we're talking about attention management disorder, we can do something about it. Attention management disorder can be changed with just a little brain training.