

Distracted Jogging



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I have recently acquired the ability to type on my iPhone keypad while jogging if I don't break stride, which required two weeks of systematic training. You may be horrified that I undertook such a project in the first place. After all, common wisdom holds that consumer electronics have alienated us from the *real* world by means of hypnotic seduction. This perspective recommends that we should pay less attention to our electronics and more to other people, to Mother Nature, and especially to our wives. I see the situation somewhat differently.

Personal relationships, attachments, and discourse are my most essential treasures and you will have my full and immediate attention in my consulting room or in conversation. But I speak for closeted multitudes when I brazenly admit that at most other times

my sensory field is of little interest to me beyond navigational cues, hazard warnings, and the occasional captivating artwork or visage. But unless I am having equipment problems my attention is not on the device at which I stare, any more than it is on the beautiful Laguna landscape or the cacophony of urban/ocean noises that surround me when I run. On a good run I look past the scenery and the instrument entirely to the object of my actual attention; to some person or idea that is present only in imagination. It might be you or one of your thoughts that I ponder. It is a rich and exciting world in here most of the time, filled with visual and auditory hallucinations that constitute my train of thought; which is the only train I ride!

Far from hypnotic distraction, most of this internal rumination pertains directly to the people that I love, caper, and work with in the *other* real world. My systematic hallucinations in their absence enrich our interaction when I am in their presence. The fulfillment of human relationships requires communication to be spontaneous, fluid, and transparent; like a well designed user interface. It is exhilarating when an interesting thought finds its clear expression! When this happens on a run I must capture it immediately, before it evaporates. In order to do that I prefer to embody the thought in text, which requires typing skills I didn't have a couple of months ago.

Typing on a virtual keypad while jogging is like adjusting to progressive lenses, and you are going to be uncomfortable doing it for a couple of weeks until it habituates and becomes transparent. You would only do something like this in the service of a higher purpose, when you realize you can't get from here to there without doing it. Most of my clients have a higher purpose in mind, but they are blocked by the lack of relatively mundane behavior or communication skills which may be no more difficult to acquire than texting while jogging. The trick is to identify the necessary habits and to acquire them systematically by means of simple behavioral techniques like those I use to facilitate my distracted jogging. Deep psychoanalysis, while interesting, is usually not relevant. Trust me. Call me.

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