

## 55 ideas from “How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy” by Jenny Odell

1. Refusing to accept that the current time and place, and the people who are here with us, are somehow not enough.
2. What is the point of this – things condemning things? You are a worthless man about to die. How do you know I am a worthless tree?
3. Refusing the frame of reference in which value is determined by productivity, the strength of one’s career, and individual entrepreneurship
4. Maintenance as productivity, the importance of nonverbal communication, and the mere experience of life as one’s highest goal
5. Productivity that produces what? Successful in what way and for whom?
6. The distinction between (1) escaping other people and (2) remaining in place while escaping the framework of the attention economy and an over-reliance on a filtered public opinion
7. I find existing things infinitely more interesting than anything I could possibly make
8. You eat a coffee for lunch. You follow through on your follow through. Sleep deprivation is your drug of choice. You might be a do-er.
9. A far more parsimonious way to live forever: to exit the trajectory of productive time, so that a single moment might open almost to infinity.
10. Hugely lucrative for advertisers and social media companies since what drives the machine is the rate of engagement, rather than the content of information.
11. We have to be able to do both: to contemplate and participate, to leave and come back where we are needed.
12. To take the perspective of the outsider without leaving... to not flee your enemy, but to know your enemy, ...
13. ... which happens to be not the world but the channels through which you encounter it day-to-day
14. Diogenes neither fully assimilated to nor fully exited society. Instead, he lived in the midst of it, in a permanent state of refusal
15. The explorer who will not come back or send back some of his ships to tell his tale is not an explorer, only an adventurer
16. Sometimes it feels as if taking care of our own health is a guilty pleasure. We subliminally equate feeling burnt out to being a good student.
17. Reinforcing neoliberal ideals, privileging the on-the-move individual whose time needs to be well spent – a neatly consumerist metaphor.
18. The ability to not just withdraw attention, but to invest it elsewhere, to enlarge and proliferate it, to improve its acuity
19. Individual attention forms the basis for collective attention, and thus for meaningful refusal of all kinds.
20. Attention may be the last resource we have left to withdraw.

21. There is a significant portion of people for whom the project of day-to-day survival leaves no attention for anything else; that's part of the vicious cycle too.
22. For anyone who does have a margin – even the tiniest one – to put it to use in opening up further margins down the line.
23. In Zen they say: If something seems boring after 2 minutes, try it for 4. If still boring, 8. If still boring, 16. Then 32. Eventually one discovers that it is not boring at all. - Cage
24. Something like collage is at the heart of the unstable and highly personal process of perception
25. What I see depends on how I look and for how long
26. As much as breathing deeply and well requires training and reminders, all of the artworks I've described thus far can be viewed at training apparatus for attention
27. If we allow that what we see forms the basis for how we act, then the importance of where we direct our attention becomes all too clear.
28. It was the performance of the John Cage piece, or rather its attunement of my perception, that provided the key to unlock the gates for those sounds to enter into conscious perception
29. Attention is a state of openness that assumes there is something new to be seen
30. Our tendency to declare observations finished, to be done with it.
31. To bring attention back to the same thing, considering it again and again with unwavering consistency.
32. The Prejudice Lab runs workshops at businesses and schools with the aim of showing people their own biases – in effect, to help learn how to see what they're not seeing.
33. Watching for it, catching it and holding it up to the light, releasing it, watching for it again.
34. If attention and will are closely linked, then there is even more reason to worry about an entire economy and information ecosystem that is preying on our attention.
35. In the short term, distractions can keep us from doing the things we want to do. In the long term, distractions can accumulate and keep us from living the lives we want to live,
36. or even worse, they can undermine our capabilities for reflection and self-regulation, making it harder, in the words of Harry Frankfurt, to “want what we want to want.”
37. Thus, there are deep ethical implications lurking here for freedom, well-being, and even the integrity of the self.
38. To me, the only habit worth “designing for” is the habit of questioning one's habitual ways of seeing, and that is what artists, writers, and musicians help us do.
39. It is in the realm of poetics that we learn how to encounter.
40. Significantly, these encounters are not optimized to “empower” us by making us happier or more productive.
41. In fact, they may completely unsettle the priorities of the productive self and even the boundaries between self and other.

42. Rather than providing us with drop-down menus, they confront us with serious questions, the answering of which may change us irreversibly.
43. The John Cage performance remapped my attention to include sound beyond melodic music.
44. When the pattern of your attention has changed, you render your reality differently.
45. The uncanny knowledge that these had all been here before, yet they had been invisible to me in previous renderings of my reality.
46. While it initially takes effort to notice something new, over time a change happens that is irreversible.
47. Communication requires us to care enough to make the effort.
48. Fear of change, capitalist ideas of time and value, and an inability to accept mortality.
49. Mental structures that can be dismantled through practices of attention
50. If we have only so much attention to give and only so much time on this earth, ...
51. ... we might want to think about reinfusing our attention and our communication with the intention that both deserve
52. In moments like this, even the question itself of the attention economy fades away.
53. The frightening potential of something like gated communities of attention: ...
54. ... privileged spaces where some (but not others) can enjoy the fruits of contemplation and the diversification of attention.
55. A view towards the future that doesn't resolve in a point but rather circles back toward itself in constant negotiation.