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(54) **DEVICE AND METHOD FOR ATTENTION AND FOCUS ACQUISITION AND MAINTENANCE**

VORRICHTUNG UND VERFAHREN ZUR AUFMERKSAMKEITS- UND KONZENTRATIONSERFASSUNG UND -PFLEGE

DISPOSITIF ET PROCÉDÉ PERMETTANT D'ATTIRER L'ATTENTION ET DE CONCENTRER L'ATTENTION

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US-B1- 6 461 316

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Description

[0001] This application claims priority to US non-provisional application number 13/919,218 filed on June 17, 2013.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

[0003] The present invention relates to attention focusing methods and devices. In particular it relates to a device which randomizes the stimulation pattern, the frequency of the stimulation pattern and the time interval of the stimulation in order for the individual to acquire and maintain focus.

Description of Related Art

[0004] Individuals with all sorts of conditions and situations suffer from difficulty in staying focused on a particular task for a given period of time. Conditions such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and autism spectrum disorders in their various iterations are developmental disorders in which focus and/or attention is difficult to maintain by an individual. Other disorders and injuries as well can leave an individual with great difficulty in staying focused on tasks. This is especially difficult for a student trying to maintain attention to a teacher in class, but is challenging for any situation where such an individual must pay attention to something for an extended period of time. Lack of attention in a school situation is especially difficult for children since lack of attention can lead to educational, behavioral and social difficulties as well as increased drop-out rates in school. Adults likewise may have tremendous trouble staying focused on a particular task and may become defocused and lose concentration thus having trouble completing a given task. While the teacher or other leader in an attention based system might nudge a person back to attention or focus, frequently it is not recognized that a particular individual, student or the like is not paying attention. It is also difficult to constantly remind an individual and if there are multiple individuals in a task it may completely prevent completion of the task.

[0005] The art recognizes that an individual can be brought back to attention by constantly refocusing an individual and as the individual improves the intervals be-

tween reminders can be increased. A number of mechanical devices are known to be available for mechanical stimulation, however, it has also been found that many people become desensitized to the fixed stimulus or interval or both and the devices lose their effectiveness over time which is known as habituation. There is still a need for a device that can refocus an individual's attention to a task but not condition the individual to ignore the reminder.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] The present invention relates to the discovery that if the pattern of the attention prompting, the frequency vibrating signal (Stimulus Prompting Signal) and the interval of the timing of the stimulus prompting signal are varied randomly that the conditioning is avoided. Further, by limiting the random period of the time interval, the interval of the timed event can be lengthened or changed based on the individual needs for being refocused. Further, randomness in frequency can also improve/prevent habituation.

[0007] Accordingly, in one embodiment the present invention relates to an attention focusing device for supplying a plurality of attention prompting signals the device according to claim 1 and comprising:

- a) a circuit for producing a plurality of attention prompting signals, the circuit providing a random different attention prompting signal each time the prompting signal is supplied;
- b) a circuit for delivering the plurality of randomly produced attention prompting signals at a time when the user needs their attention focused.

[0008] In yet another embodiment, the present invention relates to a method of focusing a users attention for an individual who loses focus during an activity according to claim 6 and comprising:

- a) providing an attention focusing device for supplying a plurality of attention prompting signals to the user who has the device comprising:

- a circuit for producing a plurality of attention prompting signals, the circuit providing a random different attention prompting signal each time the prompting signal is supplied;
- a circuit for delivering the plurality of randomly produced attention prompting signals at a time when the user needs their attention focused;

- b) turning on the device when the activity begins;
- c) user loses focus;
- d) the device stimulates user into focus by providing a random attention prompting signal at a random time;
- e) repeating the attention prompting signal at the ran-

dom interval until the activity is complete.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009]

Fig. 1 is a flow chart of the method of the present invention.

Fig. 2 is a device of the present invention on the user vibrating at a random time range.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0010] While this invention is susceptible to embodiment in many different forms, there is shown in the drawings and will herein be described in detail specific embodiments, with the understanding that the present disclosure of such embodiments is to be considered as an example of the principles and not intended to limit the invention to the specific embodiments shown and described. In the description below, like reference numerals are used to describe the same, similar or corresponding parts in the several views of the drawings. This detailed description defines the meaning of the terms used herein and specifically describes embodiments in order for those skilled in the art to practice the invention.

DEFINITIONS

[0011] The terms "about" and "essentially" mean ± 10 percent.

[0012] The terms "a" or "an", as used herein, are defined as one or as more than one. The term "plurality", as used herein, is defined as two or as more than two. The term "another", as used herein, is defined as at least a second or more. The terms "including" and/or "having", as used herein, are defined as comprising (i.e., open language). The term "coupled", as used herein, is defined as connected, although not necessarily directly, and not necessarily mechanically.

[0013] The term "comprising" is not intended to limit inventions to only claiming the present invention with such comprising language. Any invention using the term comprising could be separated into one or more claims using "consisting" or "consisting of" claim language and is so intended.

[0014] Reference throughout this document to "one embodiment", "certain embodiments", and "an embodiment" or similar terms means that a particular feature, structure, or characteristic described in connection with the embodiment is included in at least one embodiment of the present invention. Thus, the appearances of such phrases or in various places throughout this specification are not necessarily all referring to the same embodiment. Furthermore, the particular features, structures, or characteristics may be combined in any suitable manner in one or more embodiments without limitation.

[0015] The term "or" as used herein is to be interpreted as an inclusive or meaning any one or any combination. Therefore, "A, B or C" means any of the following: "A; B; C; A and B; A and C; B and C; A, B and C". An exception to this definition will occur only when a combination of elements, functions, steps or acts are in some way inherently mutually exclusive.

[0016] The drawings featured in the figures are for the purpose of illustrating certain convenient embodiments of the present invention, and are not to be considered as limitation thereto. Term "means" preceding a present participle of an operation indicates a desired function for which there is one or more embodiments, i.e., one or more methods, devices, or apparatuses for achieving the desired function and that one skilled in the art could select from these or their equivalent in view of the disclosure herein and use of the term "means" is not intended to be limiting.

[0017] As used herein an "attention focusing device" refers to an electronic device wired to produce an attention prompting signal of a particular random pattern at some random time interval and in one embodiment at random frequencies. Attention refers to either or both grabbing a user's attention and refocusing the individual user. The device can be a handheld device, a wrist mounted device, built into or added as an application to a smartphone, earpiece, or in general any device that the user can have close enough to receive the attention prompting signal. It can be a single device or be multiple devices coupled to operate together. Frequency is defined as the intensity, tone, length of tone or note intensity or the like.

[0018] As used herein an "attention prompting signal" refers to some signal that the user receives (hear, feel or see) to grab the user's attention (i.e. attention or focus) for a moment. The signal can be a sound, a tactile event or a visual signal such as a light. Sounds could be clicks, buzzes, tones, songs, or any type of sound that the user can hear. In one embodiment, the pattern of the sound remains the same but the frequency or tone is varied in the randomization of the signal. Tactile signals can be vibrations, tapping and the like and visual signals can be a light or a sign or the like that is visible to the user. These all have, in common, the ability to have some pattern to the attention prompting signal like a particular number of vibrations, series of blinks or a pattern to the taps or buzzes or the like or a combination of those which could be varied during the production of the prompting signal. In one embodiment, the pattern of the vibration may remain the same while the frequency or tone is varied in a random manner. Electronic circuits which can produce these types of signals are within the skill in the art in view of the present disclosure. The attention focusing device of the present invention is capable, once engaged, of producing the attention prompting signal a plurality of times such that the user is constantly brought back to attention and not just receive one reminder, or one type of reminder.

[0019] As used herein the phrase "random different attention prompting signal" refers to changing the attention prompting signal each time the attention prompting signal is delivered to the user such that the prompt does not necessarily repeat. This can be a limited bank of prompts or can truly be random or pseudo-random prompt. Typically, though, the attention prompting signal is relatively short in duration but that can be part of the randomization as well. So speed, frequency, pattern, and type can all be caused to change from attention prompting signal delivery to the attention prompting signal each time it is supplied.

[0020] As used herein the term "when the user needs their attention focused" refers to the delivery of the attention prompting signal to the user at a time when the user is likely to or is actually losing focus. So actual losing of focus can be measured by galvanic skin response, wide observation, movement, measurement and the like. Likely times can be for example, a set interval of times, adjustable intervals of time or a random time with a selected time range or the like.

[0021] As used herein, the term "when the user needs their attention focused" refers to the delivering the attention prompting signal to the user at a time when the user is likely to or is actually losing focus. So actual loss of focus can be measured by galvanic skin response, video observation, movement measurement and the like. Likely times can be adjustable interval of time for example, a set interval of time or a random time within a selected time range or the like.

[0022] As used herein the phrase "random time within a selected time range" refers to the delivery interval of the delivery of the attention prompting signal delivered by the device. In one sense, it is not meant to be entirely random since a time range must be selected to prevent virtually infinite ranges, and approximate how long a user can pay attention. So, for example, the range could be 5 to 10 minutes and the random time would be some interval within the selected range. The attention focusing device will have a circuit which can in one embodiment, be adjusted (either by the user or by someone else to prevent user adjustment of the interval) to change the time interval or range so that as a user gets better or worse the time interval range will be adjust to coincide with how long the user can pay attention before losing focus. So, for example, if the user with a 5 to 10 minute interval was improving the interval could be changed for example to 8 to 13 minutes or the like. The more the time interval can be varied in both length and start/stop time the more the device can be adjusted to suit the user. In one embodiment, there is a plurality of preprogrammed intervals and in other embodiments the intervals and or the start times can be set on the device. Randomness in the present invention can be accomplished by any convenient method. An algorithm, selected from a list, a pseudo-random pattern or the like can all be utilized. In one embodiment the random pattern is prevented from repeating or repeating consecutively.

[0023] In use, the attention focusing device would focus a user's attention for an individual user who loses focus or attention during an activity. As used herein an "activity" can be any event which the user must pay attention to. Examples include, but are not limited, to listening to a lecture, eating reminders, reduction of inappropriate or undesired affect behaviors and specific task completion such as, tests, exams, homework studies and the like.

[0024] The user arrives at the activity with the attention focusing device. The device as described above is then turned on as the activity commences. As the activity progresses the user will lose focus or attention or the like. The device will then stimulate the user into focusing on the activity by providing a random attention prompting signal at a time the user needs then attention focused as defined above. The device repeats the attention prompting signal for focusing the user until the activity has been completed.

[0025] Now referring to the drawings, Fig. 1 is a flow chart. In this embodiment, a user wears the device and turns it on 1. The activity that the user is to pay attention to begins 2. At some point in the activity the user loses focus. The time interval can be selected to coincide with the anticipated time the user will lose focus 3 or as described above. The device then stimulates the user which causes the user to focus and pay attention. The random interval, frequency and random signal being different or random each time 4. The user then refocuses 5 due to the reminder the signal gives the user. The user eventually defocuses again 5a and the process is repeated until the activity is complete 6.

[0026] Fig. 2 is a device on the user vibrating at a particular or random time interval. In this view user 11 is wearing attention focusing device 12 as a wrist mounted device. The device vibrates 13 at a particular random pattern and at a time within a set time interval or range or by measuring the attention/focus of the user. Thus both the attention prompting signal and the time interval are randomized or at least pseudo randomized in order for the user not to become accustomed to the prompts given. Frequency could also optionally be varied randomly.

[0027] Those skilled in the art to which the present invention pertains may make modifications resulting in other embodiments employing principles of the present invention without departing from its characteristics, particularly upon considering the foregoing teachings. Accordingly, the described embodiments are to be considered in all respects only as illustrative, and not restrictive, and the scope of the present invention is, therefore, indicated by the appended claims rather than by the foregoing description or drawings. Consequently, while the present invention has been described with reference to particular embodiments, modifications of structure, sequence, materials and the like apparent to those skilled in the art still fall within the scope of the invention as claimed by the applicant.

Claims

1. An attention focusing device (12) for supplying a plurality of attention prompting signals to a user (11) who has the device, the device comprising:

- a) a circuit for producing a plurality of attention prompting signals (13), the circuit providing a random different attention prompting signal each time the attention prompting signal is supplied; and
 b) a circuit for delivering the plurality of randomly produced attention prompting signals at a time when the user needs their attention focused;

wherein the plurality of attention prompting signals randomly vary in type and time interval; **characterized in that** the plurality of attention prompting signals further randomly vary in frequency, intensity, tone, length of tone or note intensity, or in pattern.

2. The attention focusing device according to claim 1 wherein the attention prompting signal is a sound, a tactile or a visual signal.
3. The attention focusing device according to claim 2 wherein the sound, tactile or visual signal is a pattern which randomly varies in pattern.
4. The attention focusing device according to claim 2 wherein there is a vibratory pattern.
5. The attention focusing device according to claim 1, wherein the interval is adjustable for lengthening the interval as the user loses focus less frequently while participating in an activity.
6. A method of focusing a user's (11) attention for an individual who loses focus during an activity comprising:
- a) providing an attention focusing device (12) for supplying a plurality of attention prompting signals (13) to the individual the device comprising: a circuit for producing a plurality of attention prompting signals, the circuit providing a random different attention prompting signal each time the attention prompting signal is supplied; and a circuit for delivering the plurality of randomly produced attention prompting signals at a time when the user needs their attention focused;
- b) turning on the device when the activity begins (1,2);
- c) the user loses focus (3);
- d) the device stimulates the user into focus (5) by providing a random attention prompting sig-

nal at a random time (4); and
 e) repeating the attention prompting signal at the random interval until the activity is complete (6),
 wherein the plurality of attention prompting signals randomly vary in type and time interval; **characterized in that** the plurality of attention prompting signals randomly vary in frequency, intensity, tone, length of tone or note intensity, or in pattern.

7. The method according to claim 6 wherein the time interval is lengthened as the user loses focus less frequently while participating in an activity.
8. The method according to claim 6 wherein the frequency of the signal is randomly varied.

Patentansprüche

1. Aufmerksamkeitsfokussiervorrichtung (12) zum Bereitstellen einer Vielzahl von Aufmerksamkeitsaufforderungssignalen an einen Benutzer (11), welcher die Vorrichtung hat, wobei die Vorrichtung umfasst:
- a) einen Schaltkreis zum Erzeugen einer Vielzahl von Aufmerksamkeitsaufforderungssignalen (13), wobei der Schaltkreis jedes Mal, wenn das Aufmerksamkeitsaufforderungssignal zur Verfügung gestellt wird, ein zufällig anderes Aufmerksamkeitsaufforderungssignal bereitstellt; und
 b) einen Schaltkreis zum Liefern der Vielzahl von zufällig erzeugten Aufmerksamkeitsaufforderungssignalen zu einem Zeitpunkt, zu dem der Benutzer seine Aufmerksamkeit fokussiert benötigt;
- wobei die Vielzahl von Aufmerksamkeitsaufforderungssignalen zufällig in Art und Zeitintervall variiert; **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** die Vielzahl von Aufmerksamkeitsaufforderungssignalen ferner zufällig in Frequenz, Intensität, Ton, Länge des Tons oder der Notenintensität oder im Muster variiert.
2. Aufmerksamkeitsfokussierungsvorrichtung nach Anspruch 1, wobei das Aufmerksamkeitsaufforderungssignal ein Geräusch, ein taktiles oder ein visuelles Signal ist.
3. Aufmerksamkeitsfokussiervorrichtung nach Anspruch 2, wobei das akustische, taktile oder visuelle Signal ein Muster ist, welches sich zufällig im Muster ändert.
4. Aufmerksamkeitsfokussiervorrichtung nach Anspruch 2, wobei ein Schwingungsmuster vorhanden

ist.

5. Aufmerksamkeitsfokussierungsvorrichtung nach Anspruch 1, wobei das Intervall einstellbar ist, um das Intervall zu verlängern, sobald der Benutzer die Aufmerksamkeit weniger häufig verliert, während er an einer Aktivität teilnimmt.

6. Verfahren zum Fokussieren der Aufmerksamkeit eines Benutzers (11) für eine Person, welche den Fokus verliert während einer Aktivität, umfassend:

a) Zur Verfügung stellen einer Aufmerksamkeitsfokussierungsvorrichtung (12) zum Bereitstellen einer Vielzahl von Aufmerksamkeitsaufforderungssignalen (13) für die Person, wobei die Vorrichtung umfasst:

ein Schaltkreis zum Erzeugen einer Vielzahl von Aufmerksamkeitsaufforderungssignalen, wobei der Schaltkreis jedes Mal, wenn das Aufmerksamkeitsaufforderungssignal zur Verfügung gestellt wird, ein zufällig anderes Aufmerksamkeitsaufforderungssignal bereitstellt; und einen Schaltkreis zum Liefern der Vielzahl von zufällig erzeugten Aufmerksamkeitsaufforderungssignalen zu einem Zeitpunkt, zu dem der Benutzer seine Aufmerksamkeit fokussiert benötigt;

b) Einschalten der Vorrichtung, wenn die Aktivität beginnt (1, 2);

c) Der Benutzer verliert den Fokus (3);

d) Die Vorrichtung den Benutzer durch Bereitstellen eines zufälligen Aufmerksamkeitsaufforderungssignals zu einem beliebigen Zeitpunkt (4) zum Fokussieren (5) anregt; und

e) Wiederholen des Aufmerksamkeitsaufforderungssignals im zufälligen Intervall, bis die Aktivität abgeschlossen ist (6),

wobei die Vielzahl von Aufmerksamkeitsaufforderungssignalen zufällig in Art und Zeitintervall variiert;

dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass die Vielzahl von Aufmerksamkeitsaufforderungssignalen zufällig in Frequenz, Intensität, Ton, Länge des Tons oder der Intensität der Noten oder im Muster variiert.

7. Verfahren nach Anspruch 6, worin das Zeitintervall verlängert wird, wenn der Benutzer während der Teilnahme an einer Aktivität weniger häufig den Fokus verliert.

8. Verfahren nach Anspruch 6, worin die Frequenz des Signals zufällig variiert wird.

Revendications

1. Dispositif de focalisation d'attention (12) pour fournir

une pluralité de signaux de demande d'attention à l'utilisateur (11) qui a le dispositif, le dispositif comprenant :

a) un circuit pour produire une pluralité de signaux de demande d'attention (13), le circuit fournissant un signal de demande d'attention différent aléatoire chaque fois que le signal de demande d'attention est fourni ; et

b) un circuit pour délivrer la pluralité de signaux d'incitation à l'attention produits de manière aléatoire à un moment où l'utilisateur a besoin que son attention soit focalisée ;

dans laquelle la pluralité de signaux demande d'attention varie de manière aléatoire en type et en intervalle de temps ;

caractérisé en ce que la pluralité de signaux de demande d'attention varie en outre de manière aléatoire en fréquence, intensité, tonalité, longueur de tonalité ou intensité de note, ou en motif.

2. Dispositif de focalisation de l'attention selon la revendication 1, dans lequel le signal de demande d'attention est un signal sonore, tactile ou visuel.

3. Dispositif de focalisation de l'attention selon la revendication 2, dans lequel le signal sonore, tactile ou visuel est un motif qui varie aléatoirement dans le motif.

4. Dispositif de focalisation de l'attention selon la revendication 2, dans lequel il y a un motif vibratoire.

5. Dispositif de focalisation de l'attention selon la revendication 1, dans lequel l'intervalle est réglable pour allonger l'intervalle, l'utilisateur perdant moins fréquemment la concentration pendant qu'il participe à une activité.

6. Procédé pour focaliser l'attention d'un utilisateur (11) sur un individu qui perd sa concentration pendant une activité comprenant:

a) fournir un dispositif de focalisation d'attention (12) pour fournir une pluralité de signaux de demande d'attention (13) à l'individu, le dispositif comprenant : un circuit pour produire une pluralité de signaux de demande d'attention, le circuit fournissant un signal de demande d'attention différent aléatoire chaque fois que le signal de demande d'attention est fourni ; et un circuit pour délivrer la pluralité de signaux de demande d'attention produits aléatoirement à un moment où l'utilisateur a besoin que son attention se concentre ;

b) la mise en marche de l'appareil au début de l'activité (1, 2);

- c) l'utilisateur perd le focus (3) ;
- d) le dispositif stimule l'utilisateur dans la mise au point (5) en fournissant un signal de demande d'attention aléatoire à un moment aléatoire (4);
et 5
- e) répéter le signal de demande d'attention à l'intervalle aléatoire jusqu'à ce que l'activité soit terminée (6),
dans laquelle la pluralité de signaux de demande d'attention varie de manière aléatoire en type 10
et en intervalle de temps;
- caractérisé en ce que** la pluralité de signaux de demande d'attention varie de manière aléatoire en fréquence, intensité, tonalité, longueur de tonalité ou intensité de note, ou en motif. 15
7. Procédé selon la revendication 6, dans lequel l'intervalle de temps est allongé car l'utilisateur perd moins fréquemment sa concentration pendant qu'il participe à une activité. 20
8. Procédé selon la revendication 6, dans lequel la fréquence du signal varie de manière aléatoire. 25

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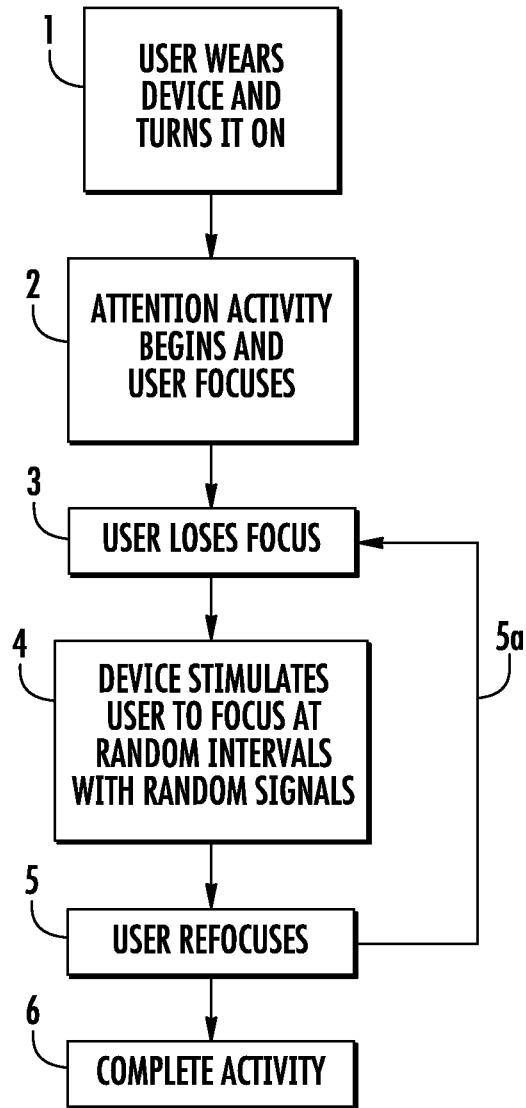


FIG. 1

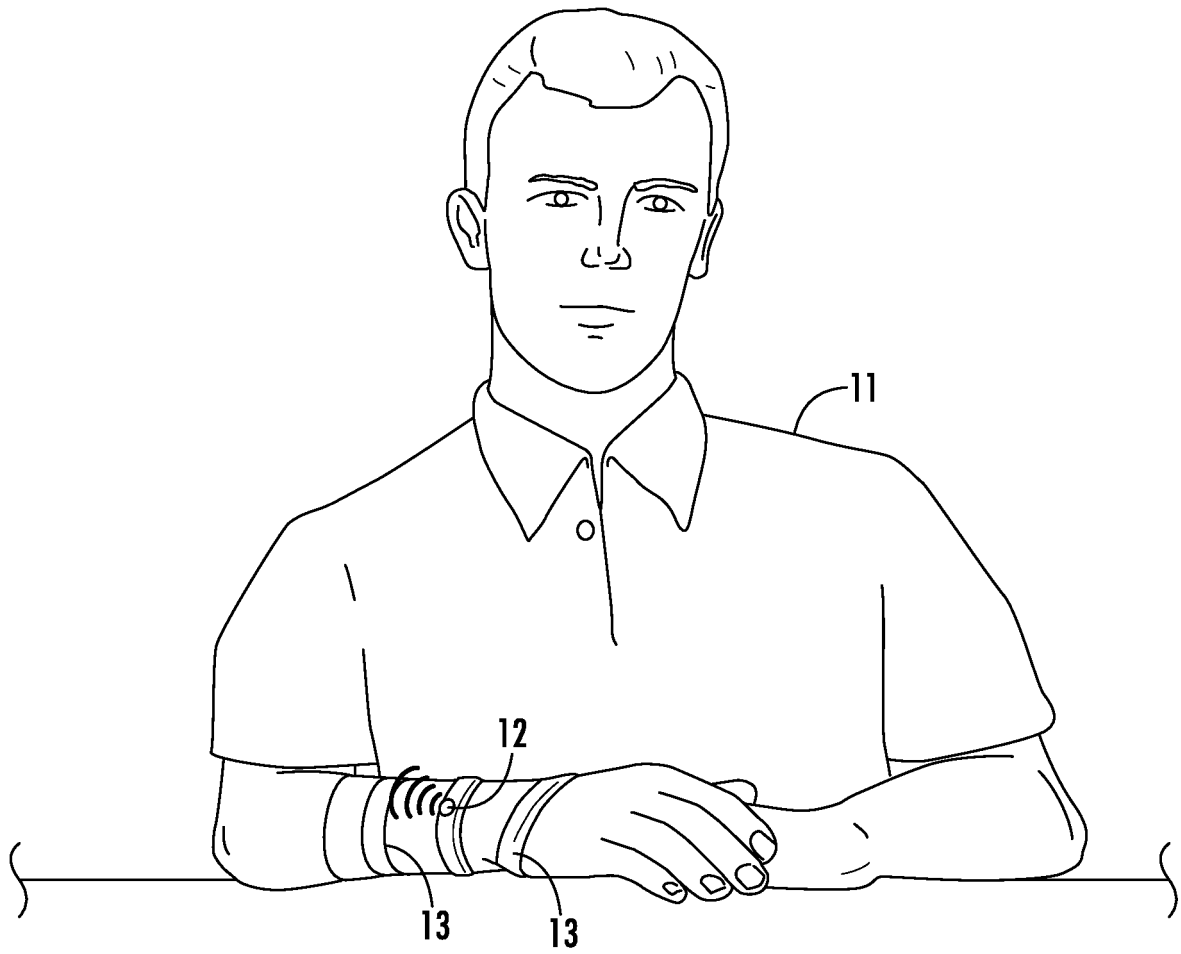


FIG. 2

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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Patent documents cited in the description

- US 91921813 [0001]

专利名称(译)	用于注意力和焦点获取和维护的装置和方法		
公开(公告)号	EP3010573A4	公开(公告)日	2017-04-05
申请号	EP2014813402	申请日	2014-06-17
[标]申请(专利权)人(译)	布兰卡乔RICHARD MICHAEL		
申请(专利权)人(译)	布兰卡乔, RICHARD MICHAEL		
当前申请(专利权)人(译)	布兰卡乔, RICHARD MICHAEL		
[标]发明人	BRANCACCIO RICHARD MICHAEL		
发明人	BRANCACCIO, RICHARD MICHAEL		
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外部链接	Espacenet		

摘要(译)

本发明涉及一种用于将用户的注意力集中在活动期间失去焦点的个体上的装置。这是通过随机化(包括伪随机化)每个提醒提示以及所选时间范围内的时间间隔来实现的。