

LIMITING DISTRACTION TO INCREASE FOCUS

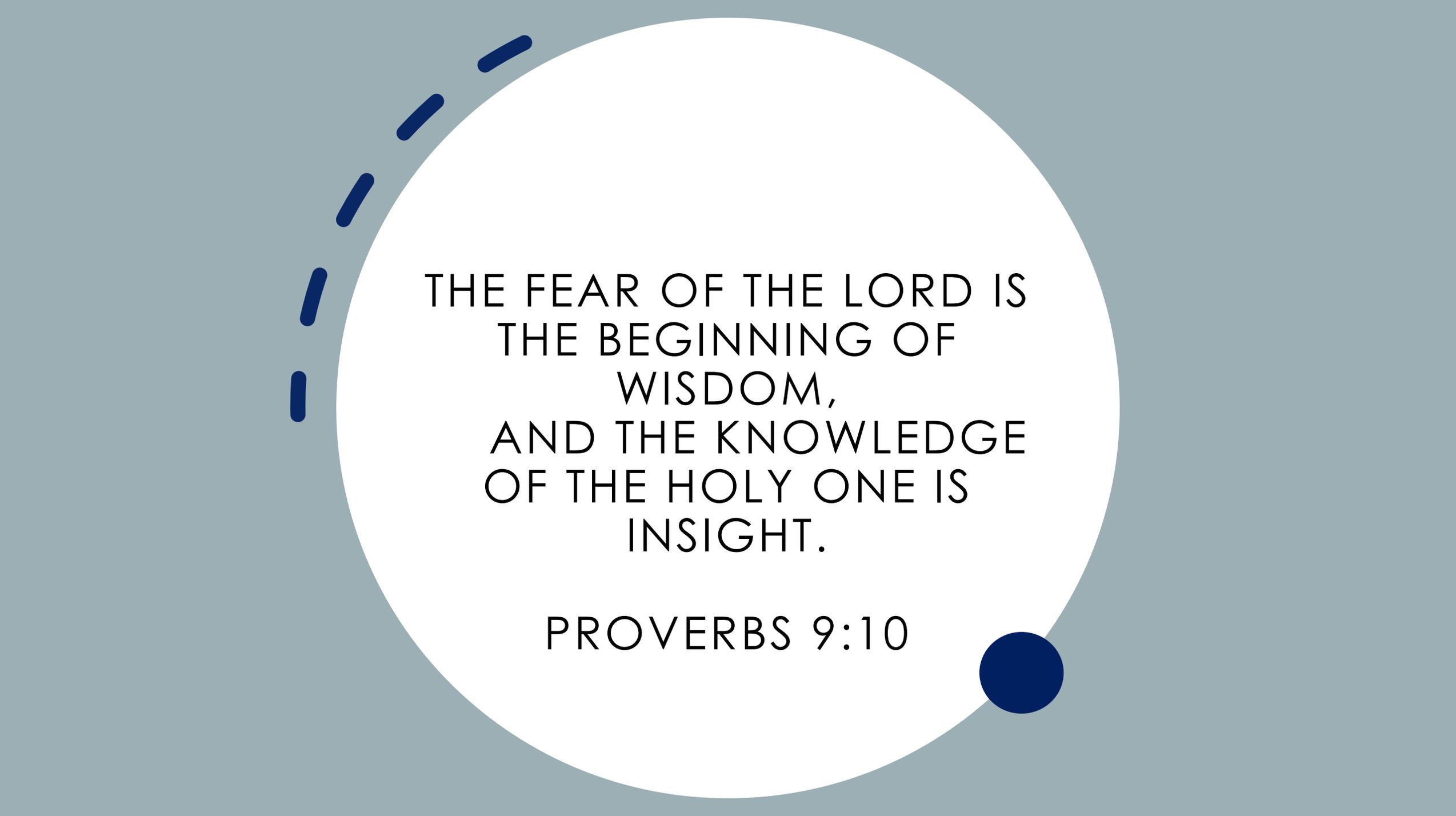
Foundations: A Student Success Series

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Learning & Accessibility Services





THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS
THE BEGINNING OF
WISDOM,
AND THE KNOWLEDGE
OF THE HOLY ONE IS
INSIGHT.

PROVERBS 9:10

Multitasking

Reducing Distractions in the Classroom

Reducing Distractions when Studying

Strategies to Increase Focus

All brains are
different!

INDIVIDUAL
DIFFERENCES,
NEURODIVERSITY, AND
NEURODIVERGENCE.



2 THINGS
FOR YOU
TO
REMEMBER:

1. Humans are not good at multitasking

2. If you think you are a good multitasker, go back to #1.

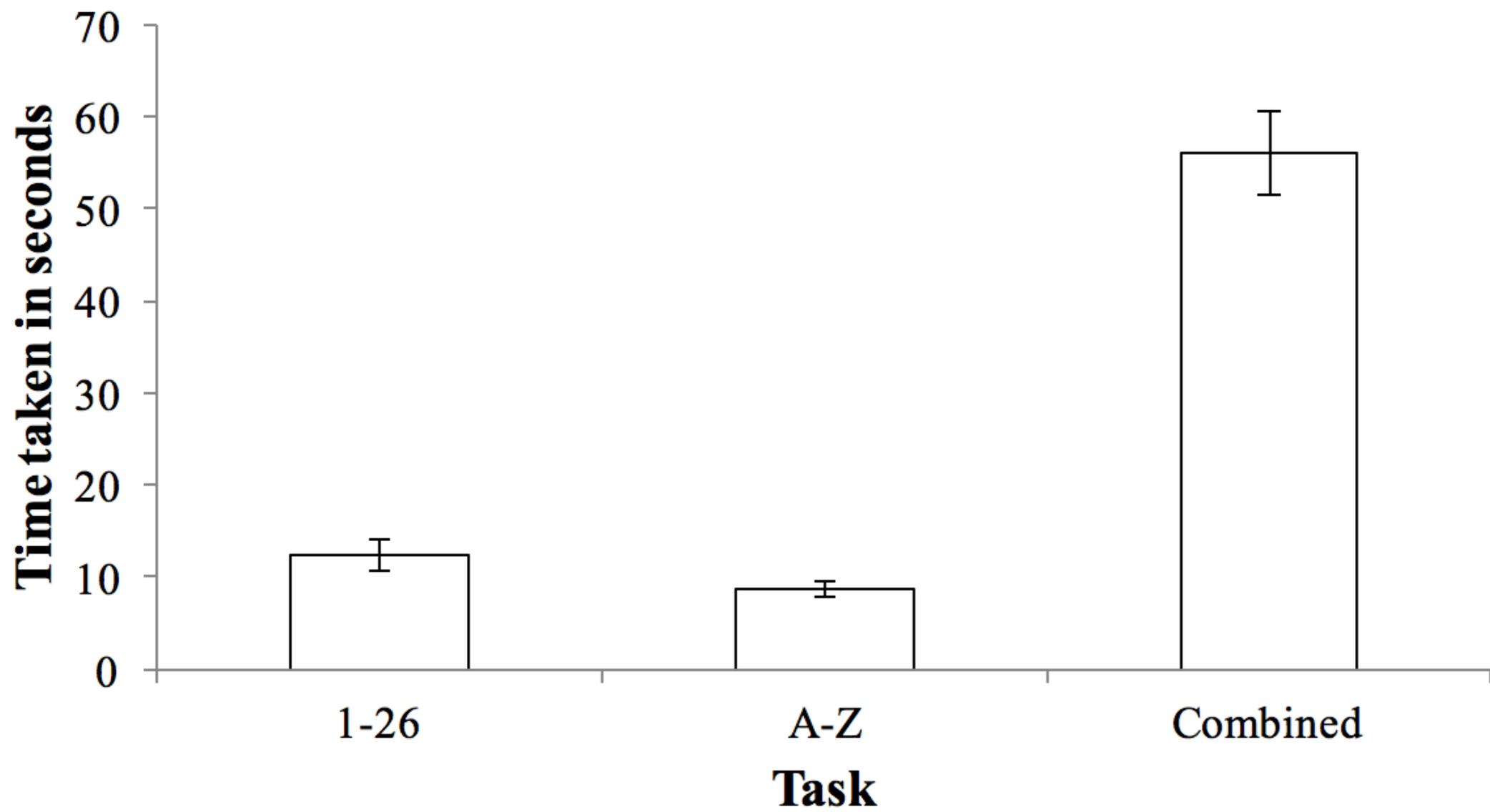
LET'S TRY A SIMPLE
EXPERIMENT....

Recite the following out loud:

Count 1-26

Say the letters from A-Z

Now, alternate between the numbers and
letters.



Average amount of time to re-focus after a distraction...?

23 min 15 sec

So, getting distracted 3 times a day may cost you one hour of time!





WHAT COULD BE A DISTRACTION?

- Internal thoughts?
- Music?
- Background noise?
- Videos?
- Friends?
- Social Media?
- Phones?



REDUCING DISTRACTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

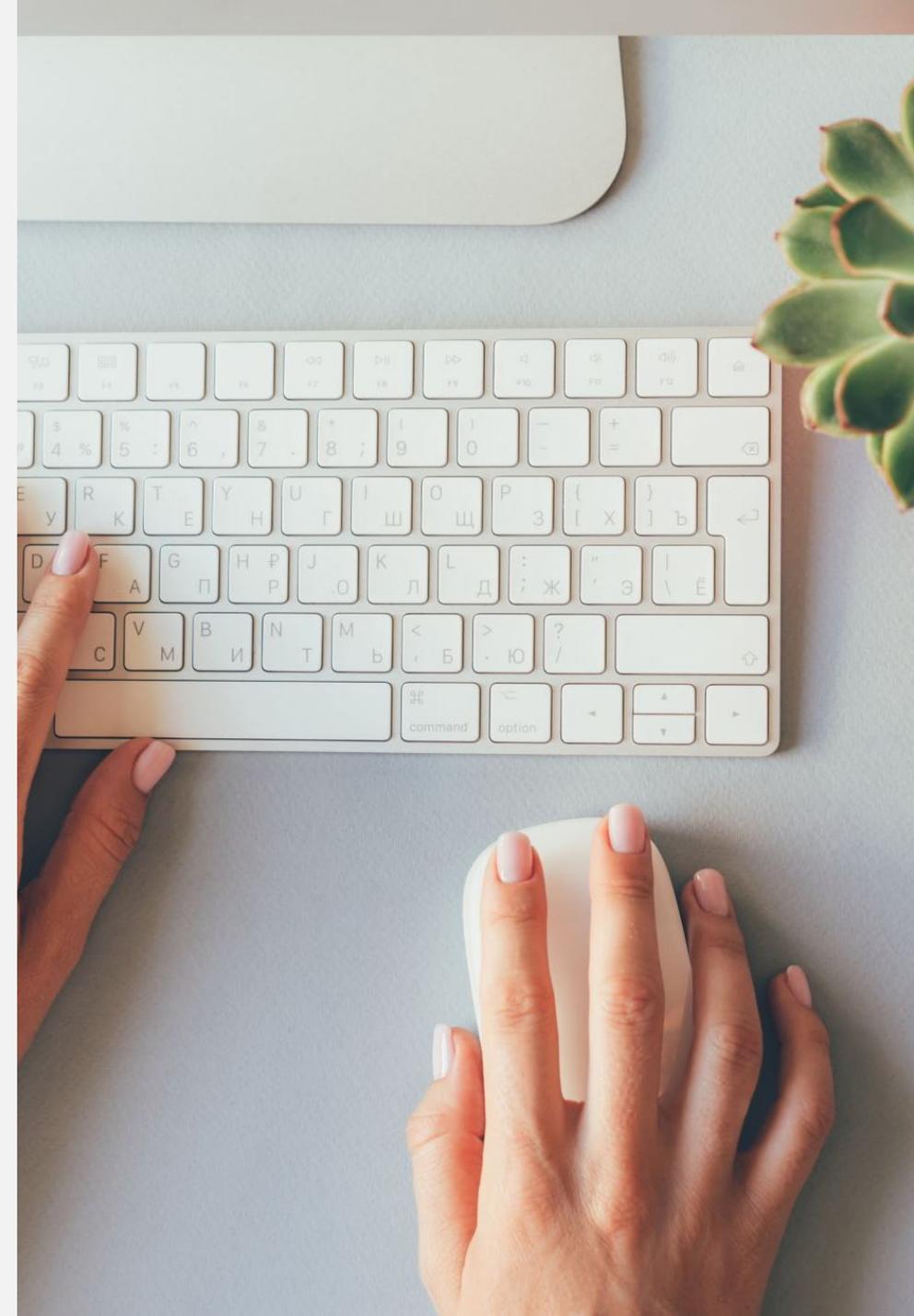
REDUCING DISTRACTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

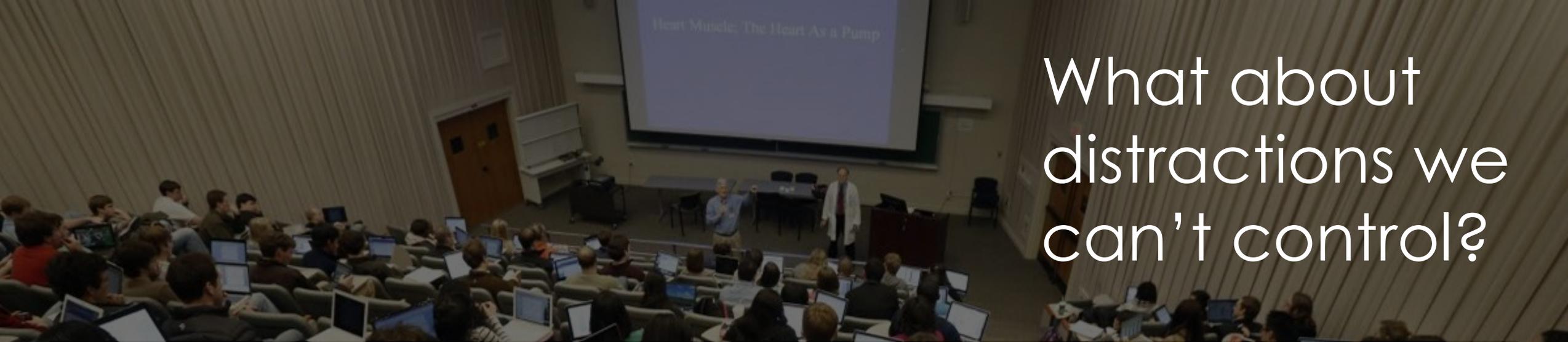
- Should I take notes on paper or on the computer?
 - When distractions are removed, both result in similar levels of performance
 - Computers *may* invite more distractions to you/others



REDUCING DISTRACTIONS WHEN TAKING NOTES ON YOUR COMPUTER

- Only have your note-taking app open
- Turn off any chat/email notifications
- Don't open up a web browser—too easy to endlessly go from website to website
 - If your task requires the internet, only open required tabs
- Think of something you want to look up? Jot down a note so you can look it up later





What about
distractions we
can't control?

Choose where you sit, how you sit, and what you are holding.

- Front of room
 - Less distracted by screens in front of you
 - More social pressure to pay attention
- Does looking out the window distract you?
- Do people walking by the classroom distract you?
- Are friends next to you distracting you?
- Be aware of how you sit – does it encourage active or passive engagement?
- Do you need to be holding something (a fidget, a pencil, a pen) – what else can support or cue you to engage?

MIND WANDERING (+/-) IN THE CLASSROOM

- Students at the first 1/3 of the classroom report less (-) mind wandering (Lindquist & McLean, 2011)
- Is there something you're worried about? Something you need to do later?
 - Unfinished business creates internal distractions
 - Parking lot: Jot down your thoughts, reminders, etc. right before class or have a place where you can quickly jot them down during class

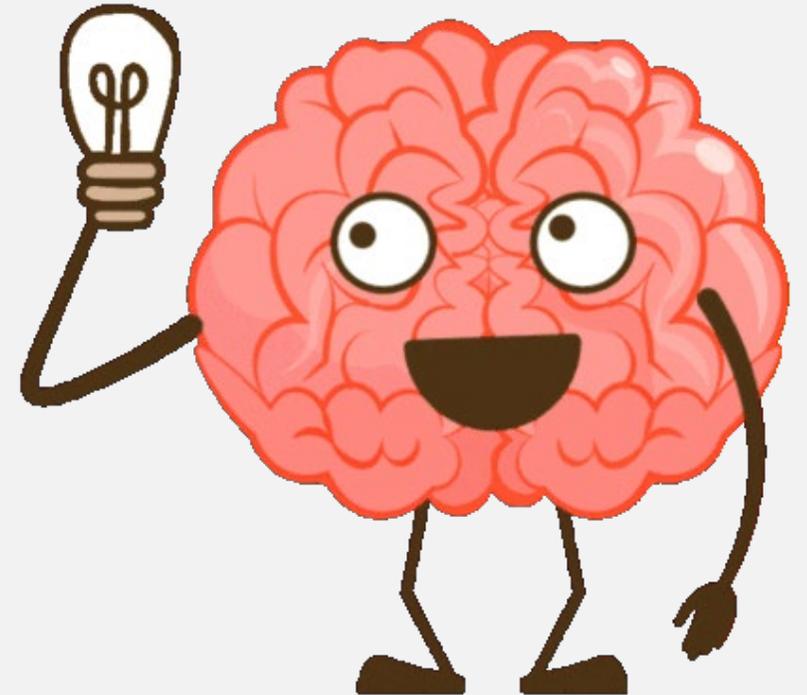
Strategies:

Self check (every 5-10 min): Am I attending/focused? Do I have any needs to address?

Increase your interest/investment/awe

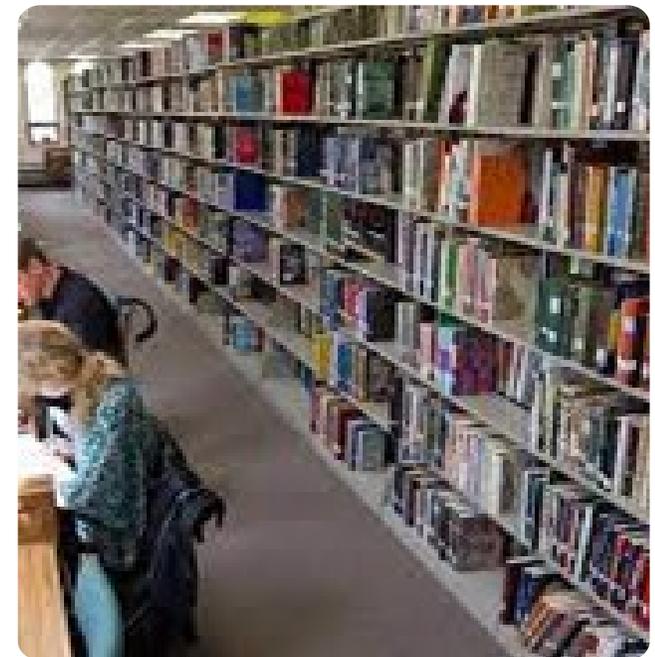
Turn mind-wandering
into mind-wondering!

- Melissa Norton



REDUCING DISTRACTIONS WHEN STUDYING

Which is the best place to study?





Control your environment



What kind of environment ***motivates*** you to work and helps you concentrate?

What activities most ***distract*** you from your work?

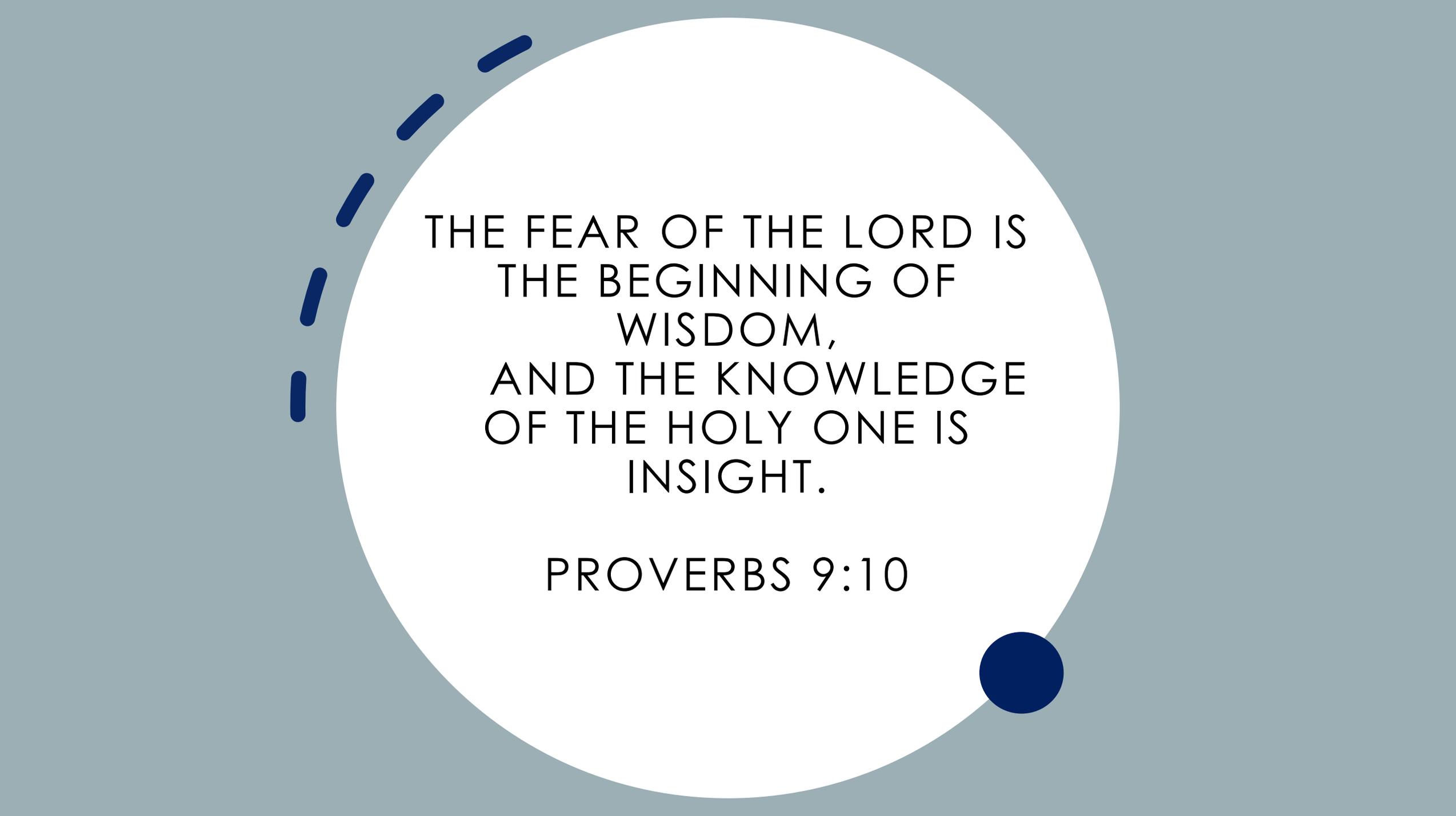
Your phone as a distraction...



WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT TECH DISTRACTION?

- Create a separate login profile for your work/studies.
- Get radical. Put up roadblocks.
- Silence it/power off.
- Put it in another room (ideally) or at least where you can't see it.
- Avoid pulling it out just to check it. If you have to, be very aware of the purpose/task and time it takes to re-focus.
- If using tech is necessary, apply screentime apps or other ways to set limits:
 - [One sec](#)
 - [Stay Focused](#)
 - [Brick](#)





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WHY AWE MATTERS...

Neuroscientific findings indicate that awe experiences are associated with:

reduced activity in the brain's default mode network (DMN)—a network tied to mind-wandering and self-focused thought—potentially reducing internal distraction and making external attention more likely.

Awe can improve **attention span** and **deep focus!**

WHY INTEREST MATTERS...

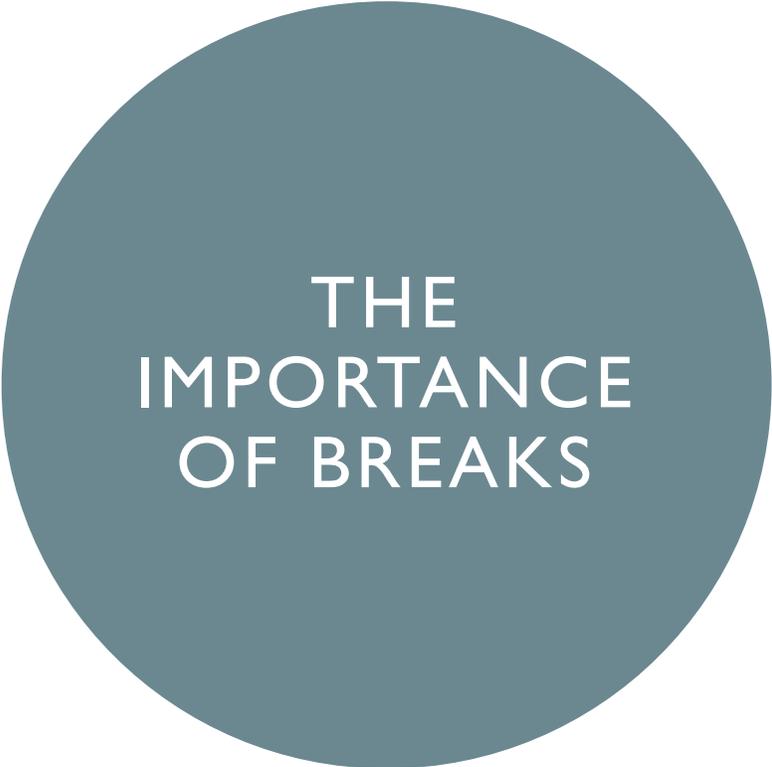
Interest: an individual's momentary experience of being captivated by a topic as well as more lasting feelings that the topic is enjoyable and worth further exploration.

People tend to allocate **more cognitive resources** to information, tasks, or goals they find interesting or valuable. Interest isn't just a feeling — it functions as a *motivational process* that naturally pulls attention toward relevant information and sustains engagement.



MIND WANDERING WHEN STUDYING

- Reading out loud reduces mind wandering.
- Increase your interaction with the material – go in with a PURPOSE.
 - Question yourself
 - Take notes
 - Explain
- Strategies:
 - Start with awe
 - Up your interest
 - Do I have any needs to address?
 - Assess how you did (did you accomplish your purposes?)



THE IMPORTANCE OF BREAKS

Taking short, effective breaks is essential to maintaining focus

- 20-20-20 rule
 - every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away, for 20 seconds
 - This is a great time for deep breathing (diaphragmatic box breathing)
- Try movement (don't ignore your body)
 - pushups, jumping jacks, simple exercises, stretching, quick walk, etc.
- Chose non-distracting activities
 - limit phone or media use unless safeguards are up!
 - [Wonder Box](#), things that inspire awe
 - Prayer/meditation!
- Hydration and Nutrition (listen to your body)
- Engage in brief stress-reduction techniques
 - stress greatly impacts focus!!



DISTRACTIONS ARE
INEVITABLE, BUT YOU CAN
SET YOURSELF UP FOR
SUCCESS WITH A FEW
STEPS!

STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING FOCUS RECAP

1. Be aware of the major factors **for you** that can lead to distraction. Internal? External? Need accountability?
2. Make a plan for external distractions:
 - Phone/computer
 - Environment
 - Body doubling
3. Make a plan for internal distractions:
 - Awe
 - Parking lot
 - Pomodoro method/breaks
4. Place meaning/value on your task – you have to see the purpose!
5. Get sufficient sleep each night (and other focus promoting self-care!)
6. Engage in self check-ins to raise awareness (back to I!)

A PRAYER FOR FOCUS

Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! May my learning be a holy endeavor, an act of worship to the living God who says to his children, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." As I embark (on this class session, study session, research, etc.), help me start with the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom, the beginning of knowledge, and all those who practice it have a good understanding. During this time, may I move with purpose and direction from the Holy One who gives insight.

Zech 4:6

Psalm 33:8

2 Cor 12:9

Proverbs 9:10, 111:10

WHAT ARE 3 TAKEAWAYS THAT YOU FIND PERSONALLY MEANINGFUL?

ARE THERE ANY ACTIONS TO WHICH YOU WANT TO COMMIT?

HOW WILL YOU HOLD YOURSELF ACCOUNTABLE?