

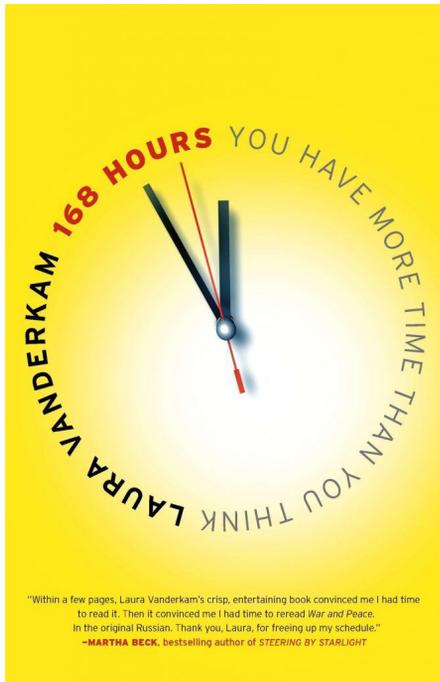
# WORK LESS, ACCOMPLISH MORE

STRATEGIES FOR MAXIMIZING YOUR PRODUCTIVITY  
AND PRIORITIZING SELF-CARE

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JKV  
Start slide 9:00 am



# LAURA VANDERKAM

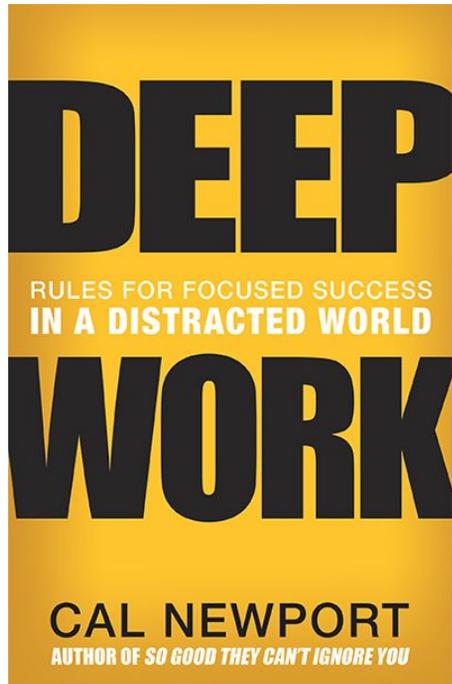
## Time Use

### Books:

- 168 Hours
- I Know How She Does It
- Off The Clock

### Podcast:

- Best of Both Worlds
- Before Breakfast



CAL NEWPORT

Work & Technology

Books:

- [Deep Work](#)
- [Digital Minimalism](#)

Blog:

- [Study Hacks](#)

A lot of the insights and ideas that I'm going to share today are supported by research. I chose not to spend time describing the research, but if you're interested in that I suggest you check out the books I've mentioned.



Tips in this presentation tend to assume that you have control over your time, but in public service this is not always the case. We have interspersed tips specifically for people who spend a lot of time on a service desk. If this is you, please also share your own tips with us - we are eager to hear them!

PRIORITIZE THE  
IMPORTANT;  
MINIMIZE THE  
TRIVIAL

ACCOMPLISH MORE  
BY  
RESTING

CULTIVATE FOCUS

End slide 9:03

PRIORITIZE THE  
IMPORTANT;  
MINIMIZE THE  
TRIVIAL

AA  
Start slide 9:03

THINK (2 MIN):

1. What low-value or shallow task(s) do you spend too much time on?
2. What important but neglected task(s) would you like to spend more time on?

SHARE WITH A PARTNER (4 MIN)

PRIORITIZE THE IMPORTANT; MINIMIZE THE TRIVIAL

Start slide 9:03

Share with a partner. I will tell you when to switch to the other partner.

Share out to group: 2 minutes

End slide 9:11



THE URGENT CROWDS  
OUT THE IMPORTANT.

THE IMPORTANT  
DOESN'T GET DONE.

- LAURA VANDERKAM, *OFF THE CLOCK*

PRIORITIZE THE IMPORTANT; MINIMIZE THE TRIVIAL

Start slide 9:11

How to prevent this?

# SHALLOW WORK VS. DEEP WORK

PRIORITIZE THE IMPORTANT; MINIMIZE THE TRIVIAL

These exist on a continuum. But to distinguish between the two, think of the amount of training/experience it would take for a bright young adult to do the job just as well as you.

Scheduling a meeting: a day, maybe?? Shallow work.

Working with colleagues to develop a new strategic plan: need to know context, trends, deep knowledge of institution: years. Deep work.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
5AM							
5:30							
6:00							
6:30							
7:00							
7:30							
8:00							
8:30							
9:00							
9:30							
10:00							
10:30							
11:00							
11:30							
12PM							
12:30							
1:00							

**TRACK YOUR TIME**

PRIORITIZE THE IMPORTANT ; MINIMIZE THE TRIVIAL

Before you can make changes, you need to understand how you are currently spending your time. It can be very helpful to track your time.

For folks who work on a desk: get a sense of when the desk is busiest and when there are lulls. You'll probably recognize patterns by time of year. Don't even attempt certain tasks when demand is highest but don't miss out on quiet times by recognizing them too late.

## PRIORITIZING THE IMPORTANT

Identify  
what is  
important.

Set and reach  
achievable  
goals daily.

Set clear  
and  
reasonable  
expectations

Do the important  
work when your  
energy is highest.

Be  
accountable  
for the inputs.

PRIORITIZE THE IMPORTANT ; MINIMIZE THE TRIVIAL

Identify what is important:

- What are your primary responsibilities? If you have a job description, performance review paperwork, continuing appointment standards, review these to help you do this.

Set and reach achievable goals daily:

- Each day, look at your commitments (meetings, classes to teach, ref desk hours, etc.) Then look at your to do list. Choose which things you can realistically achieve in that day, and then commit to doing them. Don't let yourself get in the habit of not achieving them.

Do the important work when your energy is highest:

- Figure out what time of day you have the most energy, and set your deep work tasks for that time. It's important to ensure that you're not disturbed during that time - more on that later.

Be accountable:

- Figure out how to be accountable for your efforts. Be accountable for the input, NOT the output. If you're trying to increase the amount of focused work you do, keep track of the number of hours you spend on focused work, NOT on, for example, the number of conference presentations you do in a year. If you're only accountable for the outputs, you're too late. Keep a tally for yourself at the very least. If you want to kick it up a notch, find an accountability partner who will expect to hear how you did each week.

Set clear and reasonable expectations:

- Coordinate with your team – service desks are usually team affairs. Set

- expectations and service standards clearly so that desk work is cohesive and less stressful. Data entry only done between these hours. Interactions kept to x minutes on average. Focus on input by ensuring everyone is on same page. This concept is also helpful for any team that does client/patron services. What is fair for clients to expect from you? What level of service are you capable of providing without burning out?

## MINIMIZING THE TRIVIAL

Set up efficient systems for repeat tasks.

Lower your standards.

Do shallow work when your energy or attention is low.

Outsource & automate.

Write process-centric email.

Reinvest saved time wisely.

Minimize administrivia.

PRIORITIZE THE IMPORTANT; MINIMIZE THE TRIVIAL

End slide: 9:21

Set up efficient systems:

- Always think: how could I make this more efficient next time? Even if it will take you a bit more time now.
- If you work on a desk: have templates to respond to common general inquiries on email triage or well-crafted and clear handouts or signage for common directional or simple questions. Have most used links in a folder at the ready.

Lower your standards:

- I love to make pretty slide decks for classes. I can spend lots of time finding just the right image or template. But in the end, it's more important to spend energy on coming up with the right classroom activities. Lower your standards on things that don't matter.

Do shallow work when your energy is low:

- Also, when you're likely to be interrupted. Also, try to batch similar shallow tasks like answering emails, scheduling appointments, delivering items, etc.

Outsource and automate:

- Can you give this shallow task to a student worker, an administrative assistant? Can it be automated? I figured out how to automate my outreach emails and it saves me an enormous amount of time each semester. This is another place where you should have a good think about lowering your standards. It might feel like poor customer service to automate something, but if you're spending so much time writing custom outreach emails that you're not

- tackling that big important problem, is that really better for your patrons in the end?

Write process-centric email:

- Reduce email clutter by thinking through the process before replying. Let's say a student emails you asking for an appointment. Craft your email to minimize the resulting chain AND make your appointment as productive as possible. Reply with "here are the times I'm available. Please choose a time and I will take your reply as confirmation of our appointment. Please meet me at such and such a place."

Minimize administrivia:

- Depending on your position in the organization, you may not be able to do much about all the little tasks management asks you to do or mandatory meetings you're asked to attend. If you are in management and have some control over these things, please be mindful of how much time your employees are spending doing expense reports, getting vacations approved, forms that need signing, etc. Try to batch these, do them electronically, whatever else you can do to lessen the burden.

Reinvest saved time wisely.

- Be deliberate about using time saved on activities that are valuable to you, whether that's more deep work, or simply getting your work done and going home sooner!

THINK (2 MIN):

1. What concrete step will you take to reduce time spent on specific low-value or shallow tasks?
2. What concrete step will you take to increase time spent on specific important but neglected tasks?

SHARE WITH A PARTNER (4 MIN)

**Partners: offer gentle suggestions for further steps!**

PRIORITIZE THE IMPORTANT; MINIMIZE THE TRIVIAL

Start slide: 9:21

Share out to audience: 2 minutes

End slide: 9:29

ACCOMPLISH MORE  
BY  
RESTING

JKV

Start slide: 9:29

THINK (2 MIN):

1. **What strategies do you use to get downtime? Are they effective?**

SHARE WITH A PARTNER (4 MIN)

ACCOMPLISH MORE BY RESTING

Start: 9:29 am

Share out to audience: 2 minutes

End slide: 9:37

# WHY DOES DOWNTIME HELP YOU PRODUCE MORE?

Downtime  
aids insights.

Downtime  
recharges  
energy  
needed to  
work deeply.

The work that  
downtime  
replaces is  
usually not  
that  
important.

ACCOMPLISH MORE BY RESTING

Start: 9:37 am

Downtime aids insights:

- Ever had a great idea come to you in the shower? Or while doing the dishes?
- Unconscious Thought Theory: "Providing your conscious brain time to rest enables your unconscious mind to take a shift sorting through your most complex professional challenges." - Cal Newport, Deep Work

Downtime recharges energy needed to work deeply:

- Attention Restoration Theory: our powers of concentration are finite and can be used up. Recharge them with downtime. Spending time in nature is particularly effective. This ensures that the time you spend working is as productive as possible.

The work that downtime replaces is usually not that important:

- Save downtime for when you're tired. When you're tired, you're usually doing things slowly and not that well. You may even make errors that later need to be fixed. It's counterintuitive, but when your energy is low, downtime is actually better for your productivity than continuing to work.

## STRATEGIES FOR GETTING REST

Give yourself  
hard  
endpoints.

Create a  
shutdown  
ritual.

Take your  
breaks.

Use  
downtime  
mindfully.

Get out in  
nature.

Democratize  
self-care.

ACCOMPLISH MORE BY RESTING

End slide: 9:42 am

Hard endpoints:

- If you force yourself to quit working at a particular time (eg. 5:30) then not only do you ensure downtime, but you increase pressure on yourself to work hard in the time you have.

Create a shutdown ritual:

- If you find it hard to stop worrying about work, create a shutdown ritual - something you do at the end of each day that signals your brain to stop thinking about work. It's a good time to do a brain dump of anything that's on your mind. Review your to-do list and schedule. You can also set your goals for the next day. You can do this at the end of the week, too.

Use downtime mindfully:

- You're not going to get mental downtime if you fill your leisure time with clutter: ie web surfing or mindless tv watching. Use this time well. Take up that hobby you've always told yourself you have no time for. Read. Or watch TV mindfully and purposefully because you really want to see that thing - and put your smartphone away while you do it. Take a bath. Go to bed early!

Get out in nature:

- Nature is especially good at recharging batteries. If you are physically able, walking and hiking are fantastic, but even sitting in a park for 10-15 minutes can achieve this goal.

Take your breaks:

- Make sure to use your breaks and lunch hour to recharge. Go somewhere

- where patrons won't recognize you and sneak in a question. Resist the urge to follow up on email in the break room. Take a walk. Read a magazine article. Have a coffee and a meaningful chat with a friend. Try to even step away from screens altogether, if you can.

#### Democratize self-care

- Privileges / access can vary by institution. If you're in a decision-making role, look at the culture to make sure that time for rest, ability to step away from stressful interactions, and access to self-care is equally available across positions. In your own role, advocate for your need to balance emotional/affective labour with other parts of your role to avoid burnout.

THINK (2 MIN):

1. **What concrete step will you take to increase the quantity and/or quality of downtime?**

SHARE WITH A PARTNER (4 MIN)

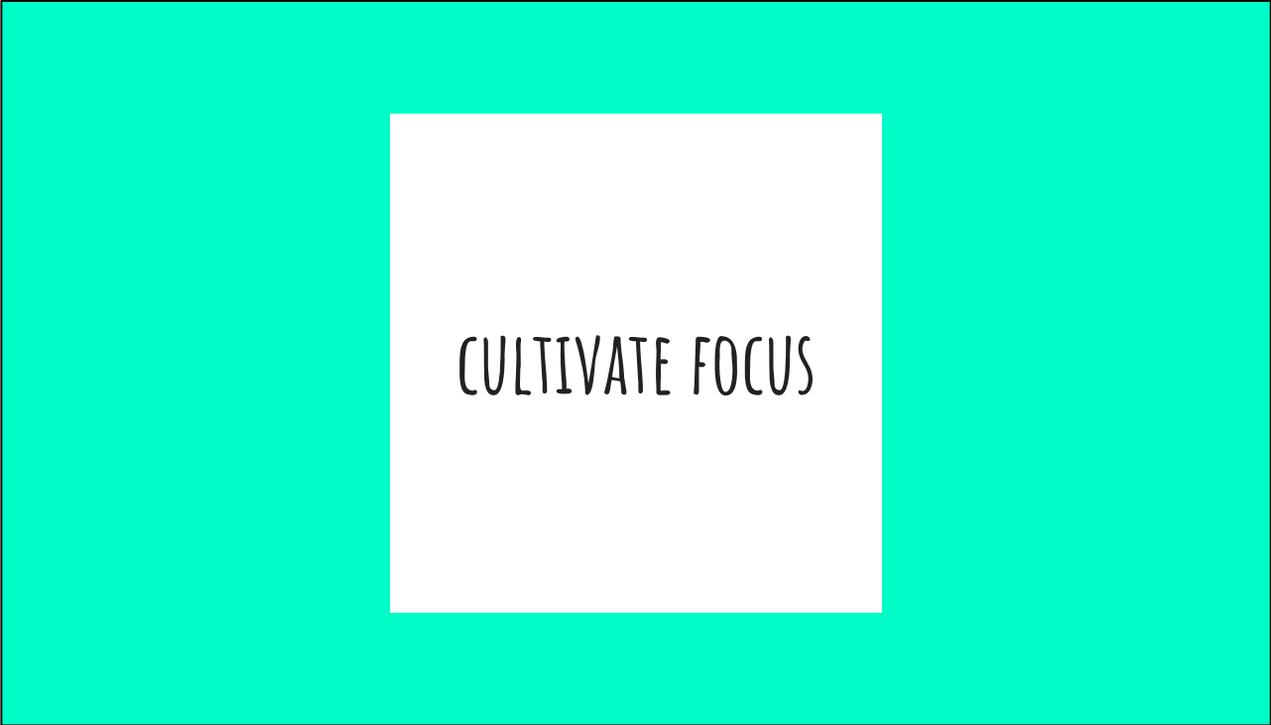
**Partners: offer gentle suggestions for further steps!**

ACCOMPLISH MORE BY RESTING

Start: 9:42 am

Share out to audience: 2 minutes

End slide: 9:50 am



CULTIVATE FOCUS

AA

Start slide: 9:50 am

THINK (2 MIN):

1. **What distraction most prevents you from focusing on your important work?**

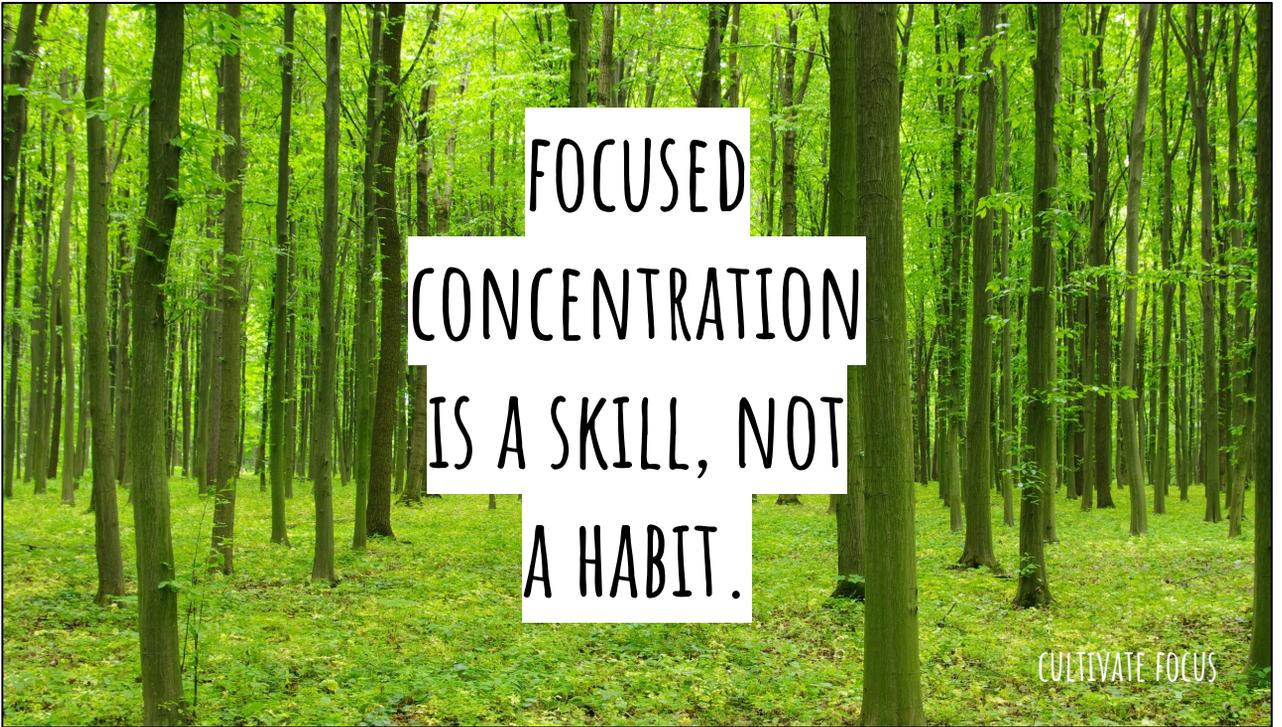
SHARE WITH A PARTNER (4 MIN)

CULTIVATE FOCUS

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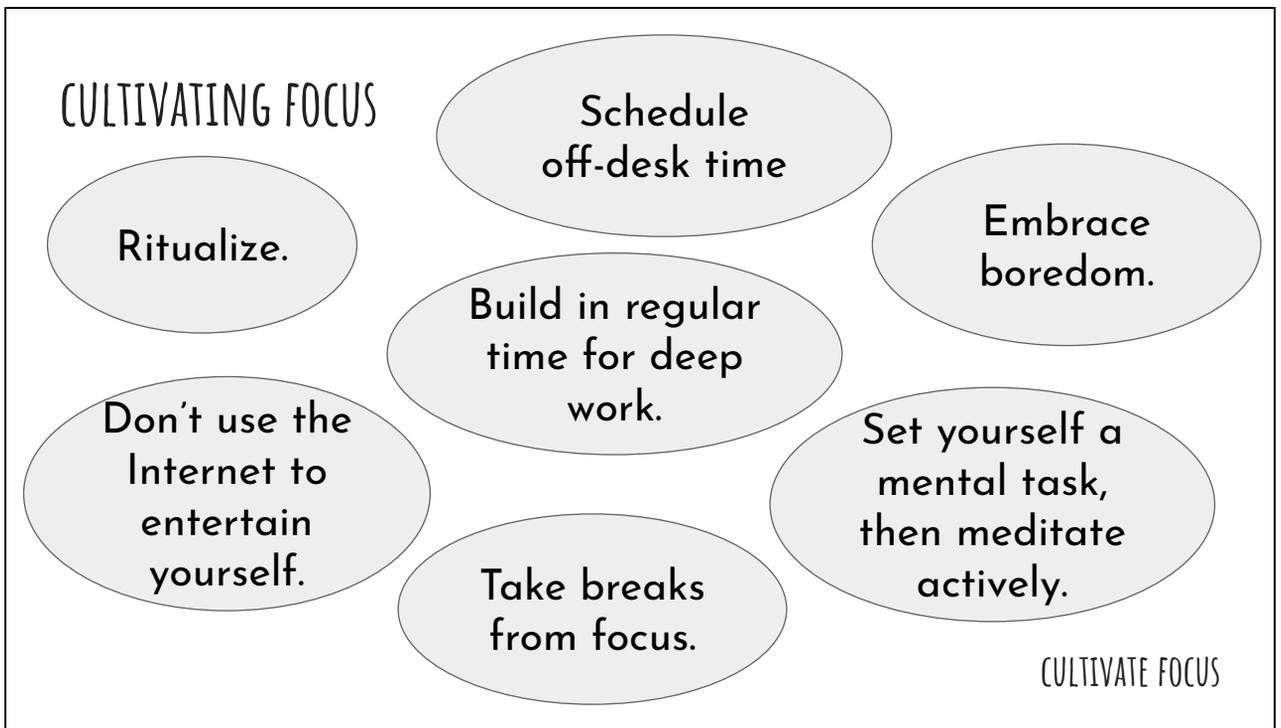
Share out to audience: 2 minutes

End slide: 9:58 am



Start slide: 9:58 am

It seems like if only we'd get down to business and stop being distracted, we'd be able to focus. In fact, that's not all it takes. Being able to buckle down and focus quickly is actually a skill that can be developed.



#### Ritualize:

- Develop rituals that signals to your brain that it's time to work. It helps if the rituals also sustain your work. For example, you might go fill up your water bottle, visit the bathroom, get a cup of coffee, gather your notes, etc. Try to do the same thing each time.

#### Build in regular time for deep work:

- There are lots of possible approaches to this. I suspect that for many of us, the best strategy will be to block out several hours each day for deep work. It's very important that we not be disturbed during this time. Put it on your calendar. Put a sticky note on your door, if you have one, or put a sign on your desk. (Explain to your colleagues in advance if that makes you feel uncomfortable.) Put on headphones with white noise if you work in an open office plan. Log out of email and any instant message programs you use. Put your smartphone in a drawer or somewhere else out of reach. Turn off notifications.
- Many of us probably work in jobs where being available to patrons is important. Try to resist feeling like you need to always be available. Don't say "drop by my office anytime." If you want patrons to be able to drop by, set up office hours and then prioritize that during those hours. (Save shallow work for those times when you might be interrupted.)

#### Schedule off-desk time:

- Take a "shift" of an hour or two a day away from the service desk to focus on work or other priorities to enhance connection to the organization, recharge

- from “always being on” and complete tasks by scheduling more than one person a day or overlapping shifts.

Embrace boredom:

- Find spaces in your day to be bored - waiting in line, walking somewhere, doing dishes, etc. This trains your brain to stop craving distraction and helps you focus.

Don't use the Internet to entertain yourself.

- The Internet is a powerful distraction. It is so highly stimulating that everything else seems boring by comparison. Allowing yourself to be entertained at all times by the Internet weakens your mind's ability to resist distraction. Instead, put more thought into your leisure time, as I already mentioned earlier.

Take breaks from focus:

- This seems obvious, but many times our day is actually filled with distraction (often from email and the Internet) and the times we focus are more like breaks. Instead, decide that for the next x amount of time, you will work deeply, and then take a brief distraction break. Cal Newport goes into a lot more detail on this in his book Deep Work.

Set yourself a mental task:

- Set yourself a mental task - for example, how should I structure my upcoming presentation? Or, how should I handle a difficult interpersonal problem with a colleague? If necessary, spend some time reading over the raw materials needed, then go for a walk or do some other mentally undemanding but physical task away from screens. Use that time to chew over the problem. Make sure you have a notebook handy to write down any solutions or ideas. Again, check out Deep Work for more on this technique.



REDEFINE "DEEP  
WORK" FOR YOUR  
OWN CONTEXT.

CULTIVATE FOCUS

End slide: 10:03 am

Re-define "Deep Work" – when your focus is customer service, the deep work or input that matters most is **connecting** with patrons. Switch your thinking from user queries as distractions or interruptions from other work and channel energy into connection, engagement, and support as the important work.

THINK (2 MIN):

1. **What concrete step will you take to cultivate focus?**

SHARE WITH A PARTNER (4 MIN)

**Partners: offer gentle suggestions for further steps!**

CULTIVATE FOCUS

Start slide: 10:03 am

Share out to audience: 2 minutes

End slide: 10:11 am

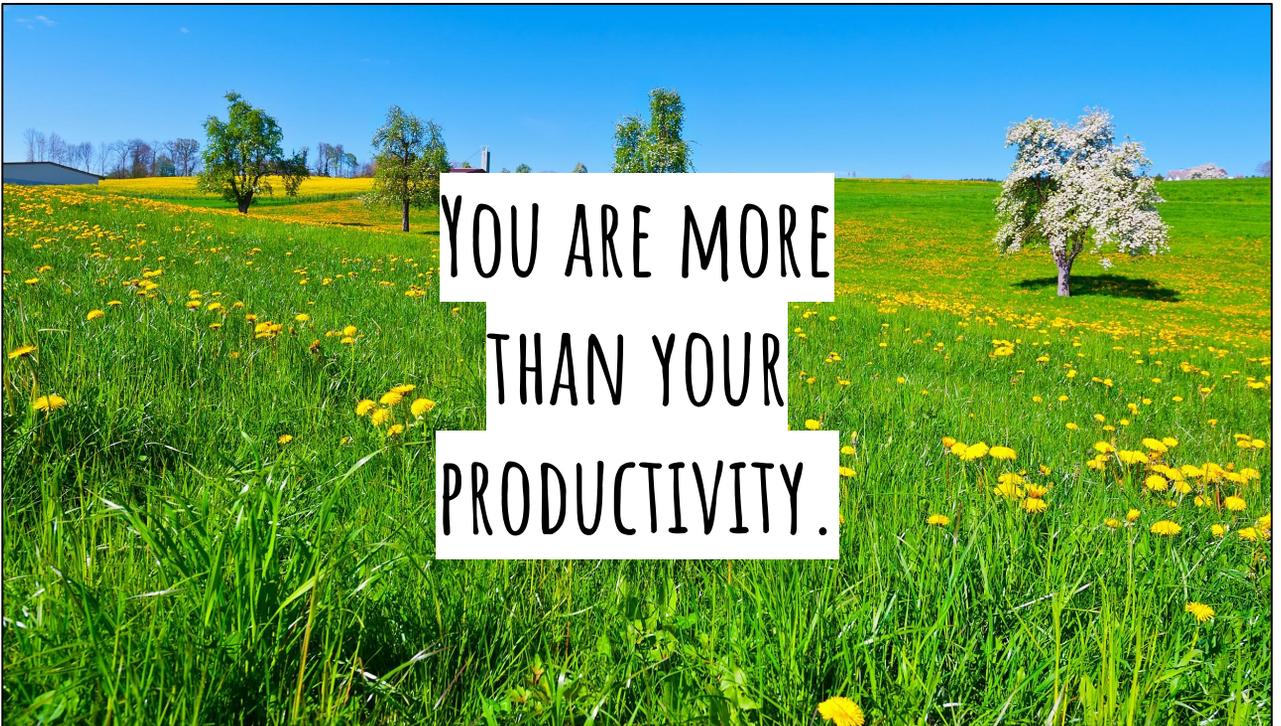
PRIORITIZE THE  
IMPORTANT;  
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ACCOMPLISH MORE  
BY  
RESTING

CULTIVATE FOCUS

JKV

Start slide: 10:11 am



End slide: 10:14 am

We all go through periods where it's hard to focus, it's hard to be productive, other things take precedence, or we just don't have the energy to do more than scroll through Instagram. That's OK! That's what it means to be human, particularly in this society at this time. When you get to that point, I believe the best approach is actually to take more breaks, get more genuine rest, and try again tomorrow, or next week. There's always another opportunity for a fresh start.

For me, productivity is not about making sure that my organization can squeeze every last drop of work out of me, so that I'm wrung out and can't give anymore. I care about maximizing my productivity during my work hours so that I can provide good value to my organization while ALSO having time to pursue other things that are important to me, take care of my family, and maintain my health and wellbeing. That's what I wish for each and every one of you.

# QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

[bit.ly/OLAproductivity2020](https://bit.ly/OLAproductivity2020)

JKV + AA to facilitate  
Start slide: 10:14 am