Planning and pacing cognitive-communication activities

Regardless of the activity: you want to <u>stop for breaks while you still feel ok</u> rather than waiting until you *have* to

(a gentle tap on the shoulder rather than red alert)

- begin any cognitive or communication activity with a **plan** so you don't forget to stop in time
- **set a timer** reminding you to take a break – many people have trained themselves to ignore early signs of fatigue while doing cognitive tasks
- experiment with the timing e.g. 15 minutes working, 2 minute break
- there are many focus apps - they default to 25 minutes focus, 5 minutes break but you can change the ratio e.g. Pomodoro Focus Timer or Flora
- some tasks need to be broken up a different way (chapters, number of emails or phone calls) – build this into your plan
- if you work for more than 30 minutes, take a longer break
- when the alert goes - do an internal scan for the signs you might not have noticed: irritability, having to reread, making errors, headache, unable to process (so you start to be more aware of those signs)
- on short breaks - two minutes **diaphragmatic breathing** (aim for positive thoughts or visualizations during this time, or focus on an app like Breathe2Relax)
- on longer breaks - stretch, make tea, sit outside - rest your brain
- phone calls and household tasks and reading the news on your phone are not breaks as far as your brain is concerned – a break should be **restorative**
- **The break schedule is only a guide.** If you get signals from your body or brain that you're near your limit after only 10 minutes, stop and rest, or just stop.
- You can stop sooner than planned, but not later – wait until this schedule has been working well before trying to increase the length of time between breaks

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