



Webinar

The Mirage of Multitasking: Find Your Focus, Flow and Finish Line

Sponsored by  **cornerstone**

March 21, 2019

KNOWLEDGE | RESOURCES | ADVOCACY | CONNECTIONS

Webinar

Presenter



Scott Blades, M.Ed.

*Assistant Director, Training &
Organizational Development*
University of Florida

KNOWLEDGE | RESOURCES | ADVOCACY | CONNECTIONS



Disclaimer

1

We live in the real world, and we have many demands on our time and attention.

2

Sometimes the demands of the modern-day workplace *will* necessitate multitasking.

3

We will *never* be able to avoid multitasking completely.

4

The goal of this course is to *reduce* our multitasking tendencies and implement best practices in productivity to increase our effectiveness.

You Might be a Supertasker

2-3% of the
population



Multitasking?

Multitasking?



Multitasking?







Multitasking



Here's the Problem...

Multitasking

Decreases productivity

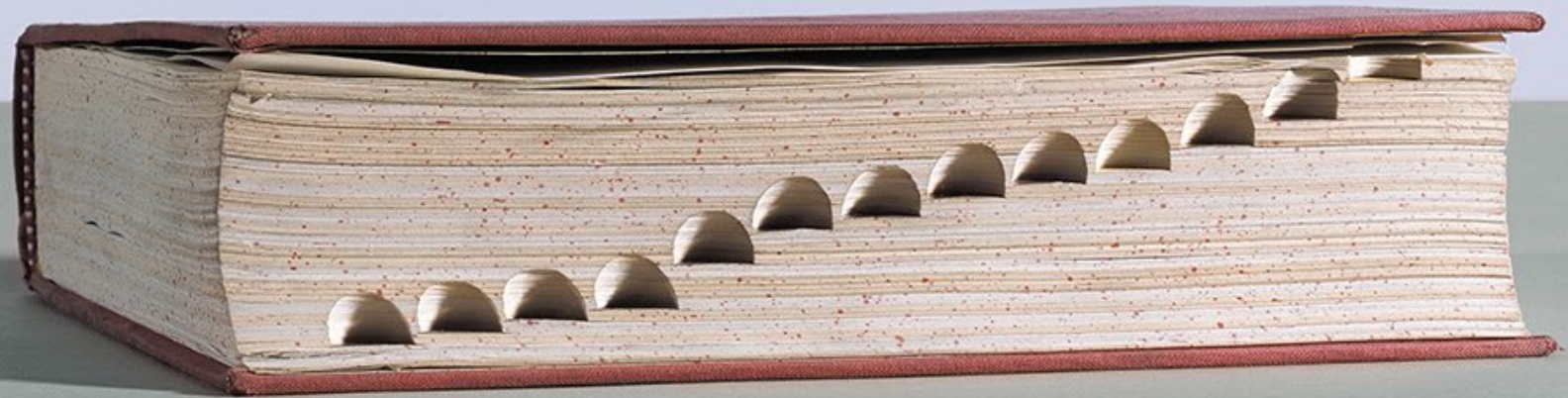
Impairs cognition

Makes you impulsive

Increases stress

Diminishes creativity

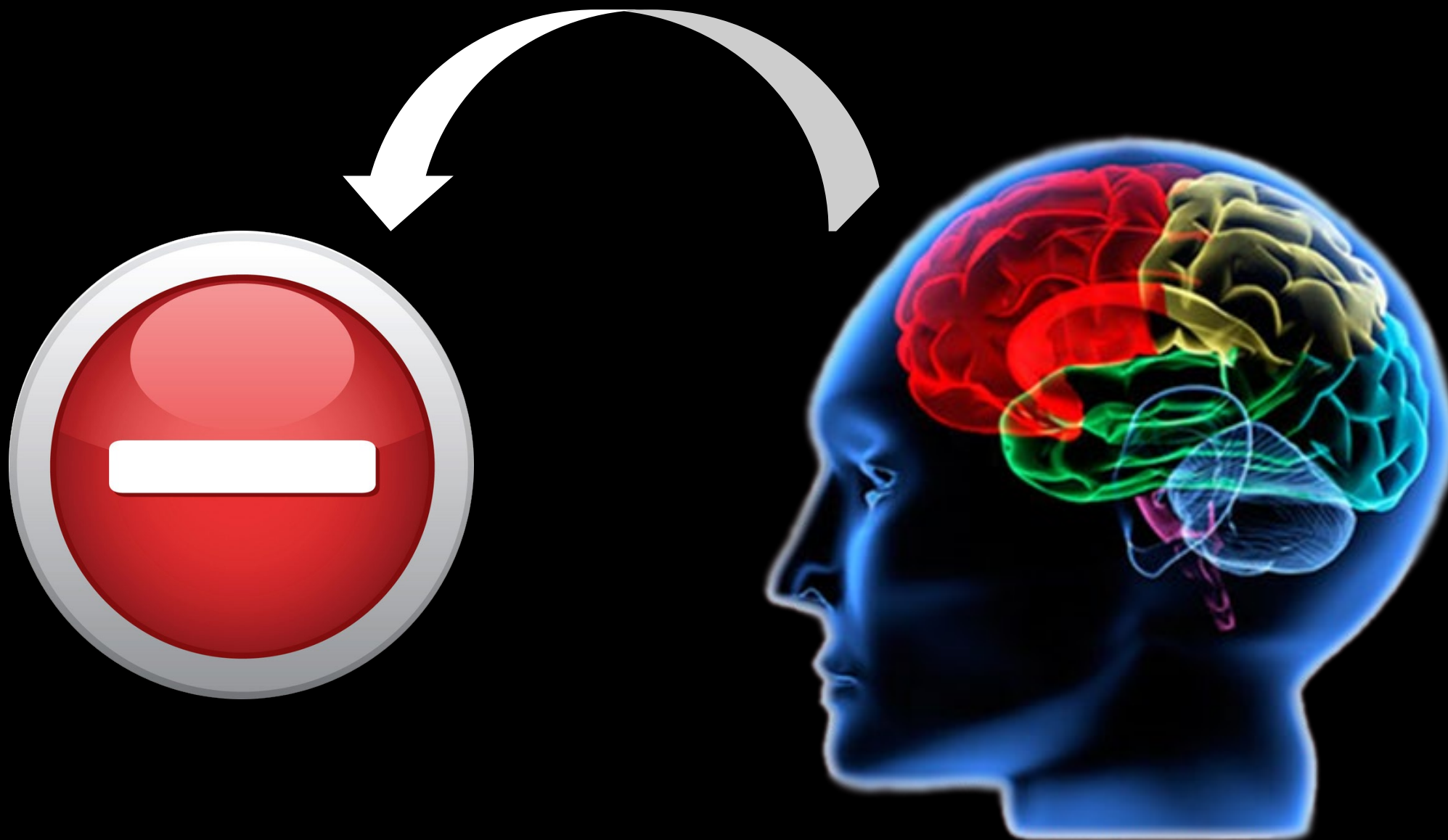
Objectives



VS

Multitasking

Managing Multiple Priorities









VS





What Exactly is Multitasking?

- ❑ Focusing on more than one assignment at a time
- ❑ Repeatedly switching back and forth between two or more activities
- ❑ Performing a number of loosely related or unrelated tasks in rapid succession

PAIRINGS

that *don't* affect performance

However...

If you pair two activities that require **conscious thought**, your performance on both tasks will suffer.



**Examples
@ Work?**



The Multitasking Brain

Doing two cognitive tasks at once?

Your cerebral cortex
processes the tasks in
two stages.



Doing two cognitive tasks at once?

Stage 1: Goal shifting

Shift your focus
from one activity
to the other.

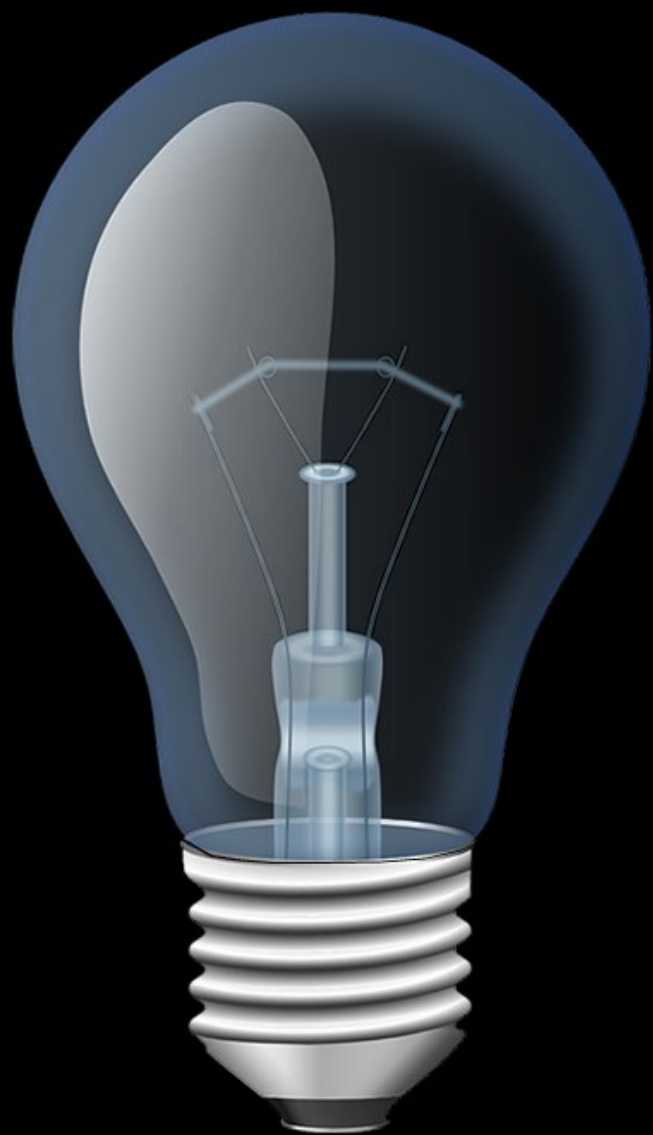


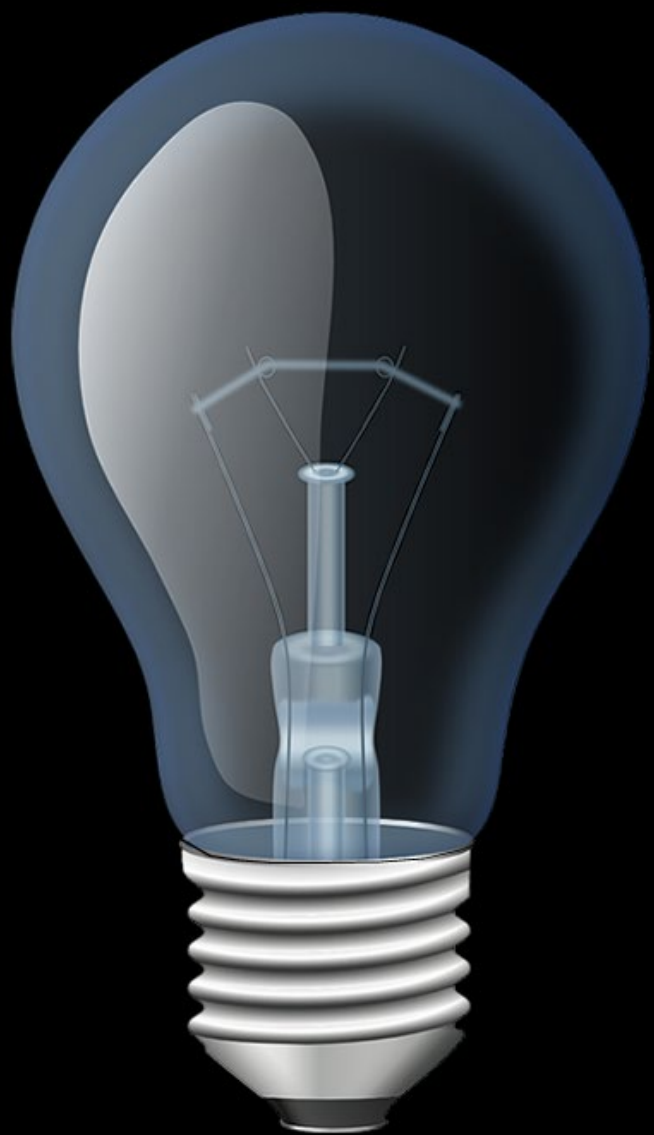
Doing two cognitive tasks at once?

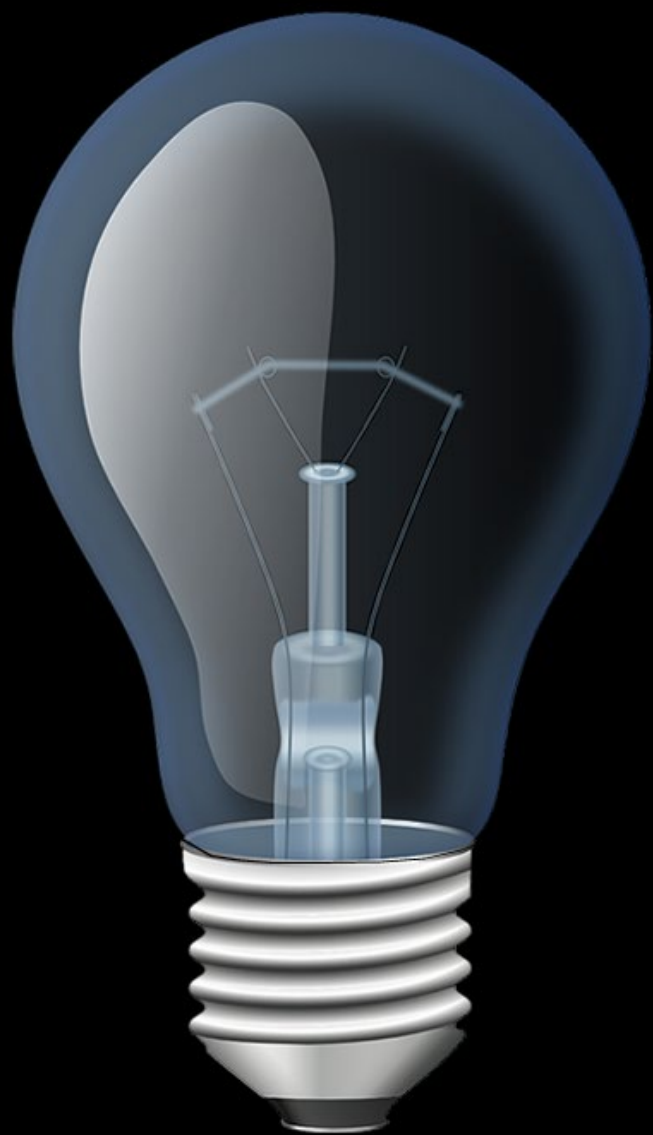
Stage 2: Rule Activation

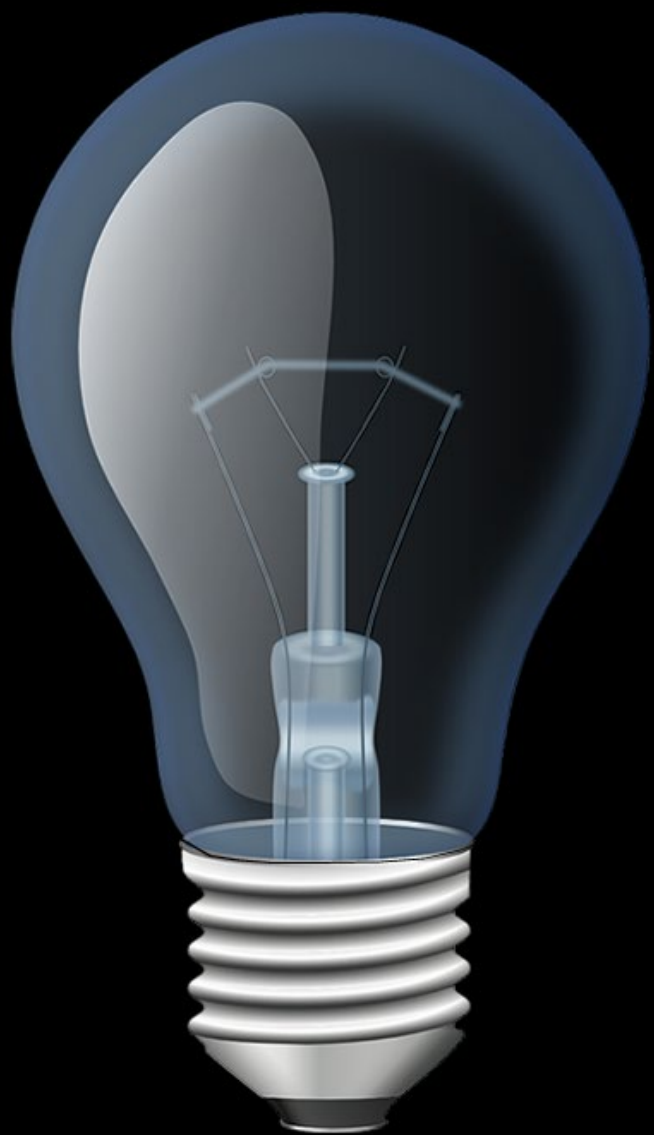
Deactivate the rules of the previous activity and then turn on the rules for the new task.

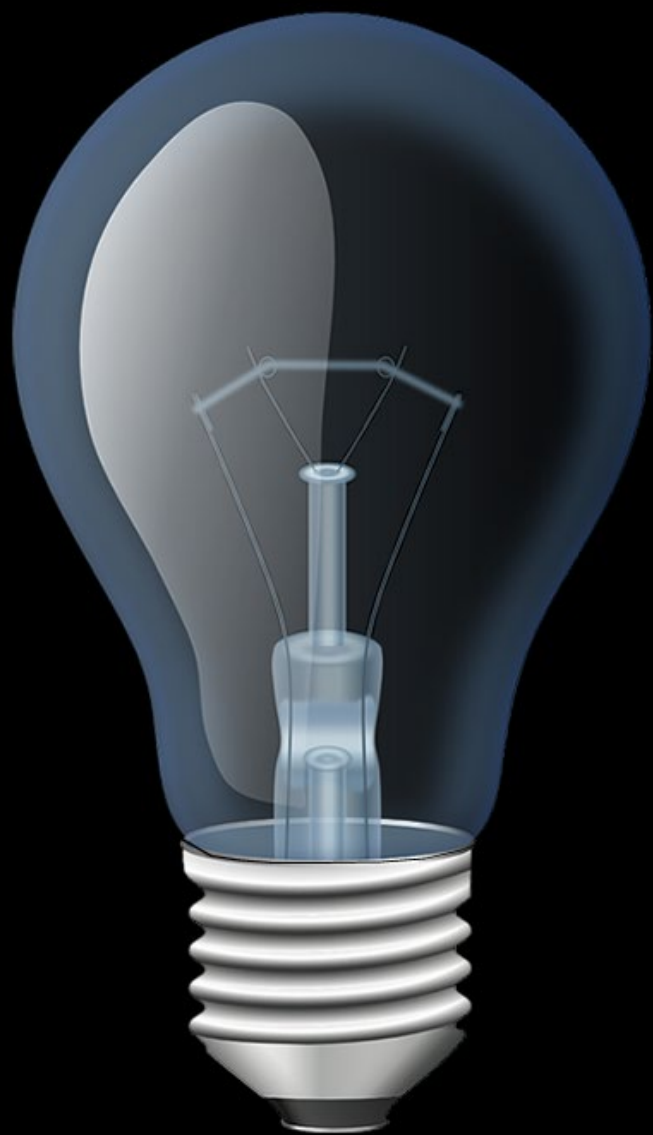


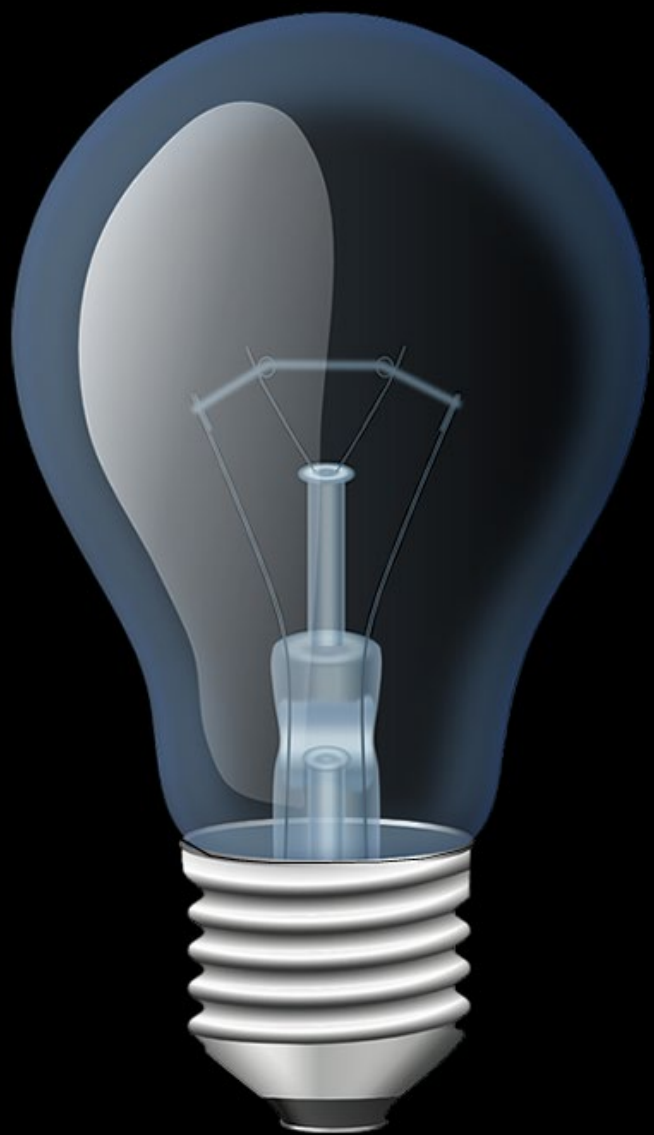


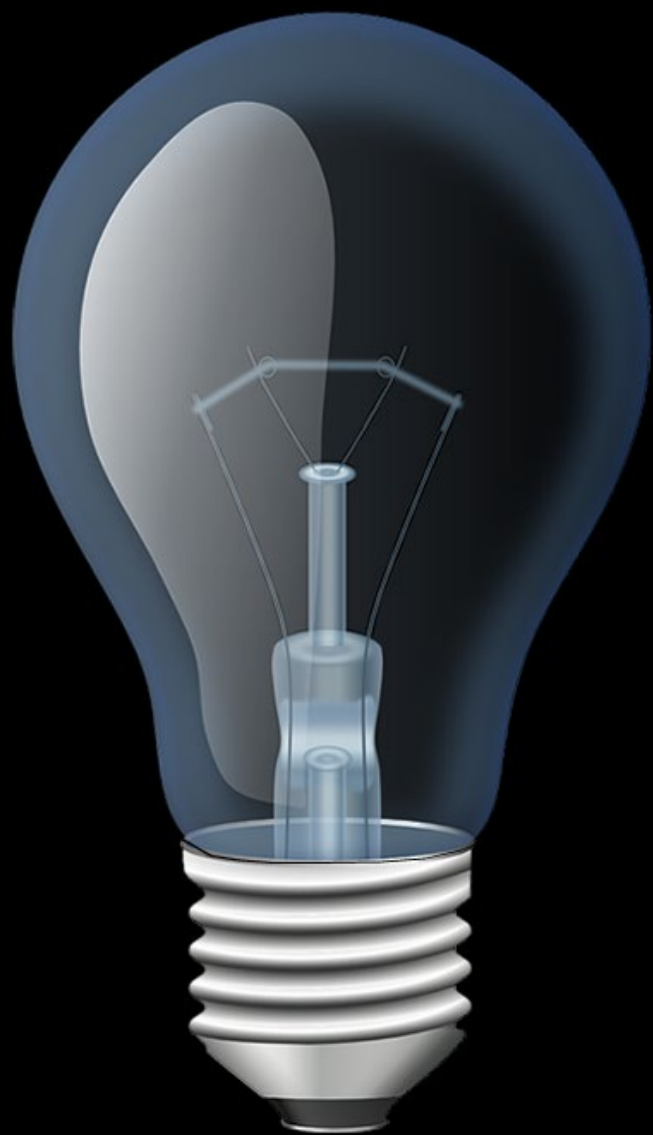


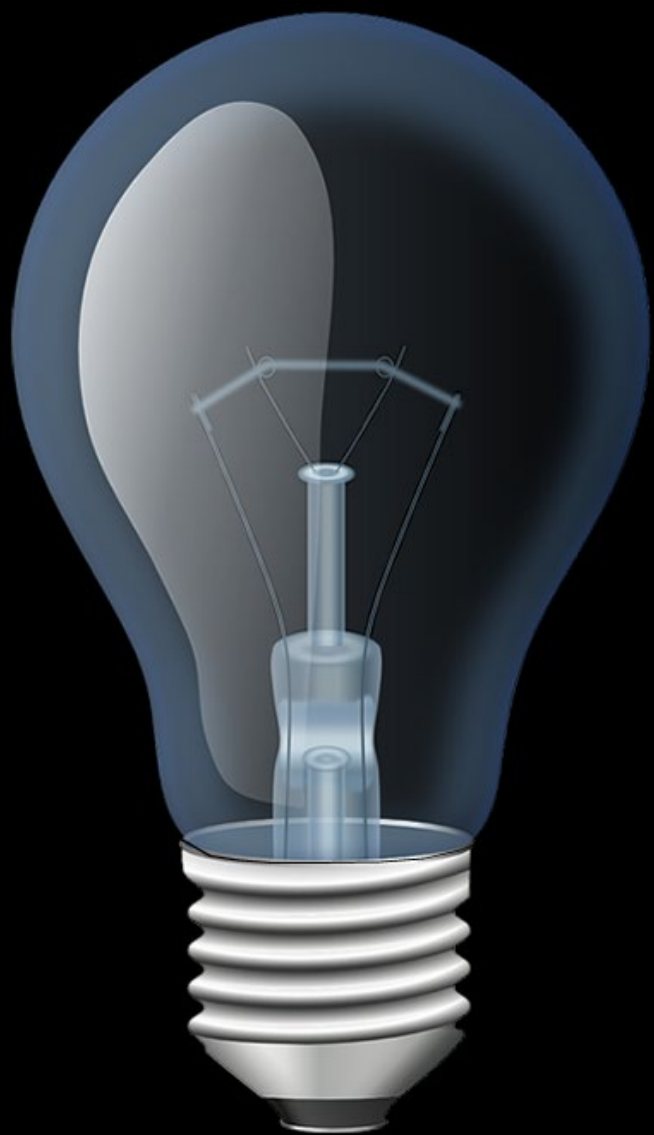


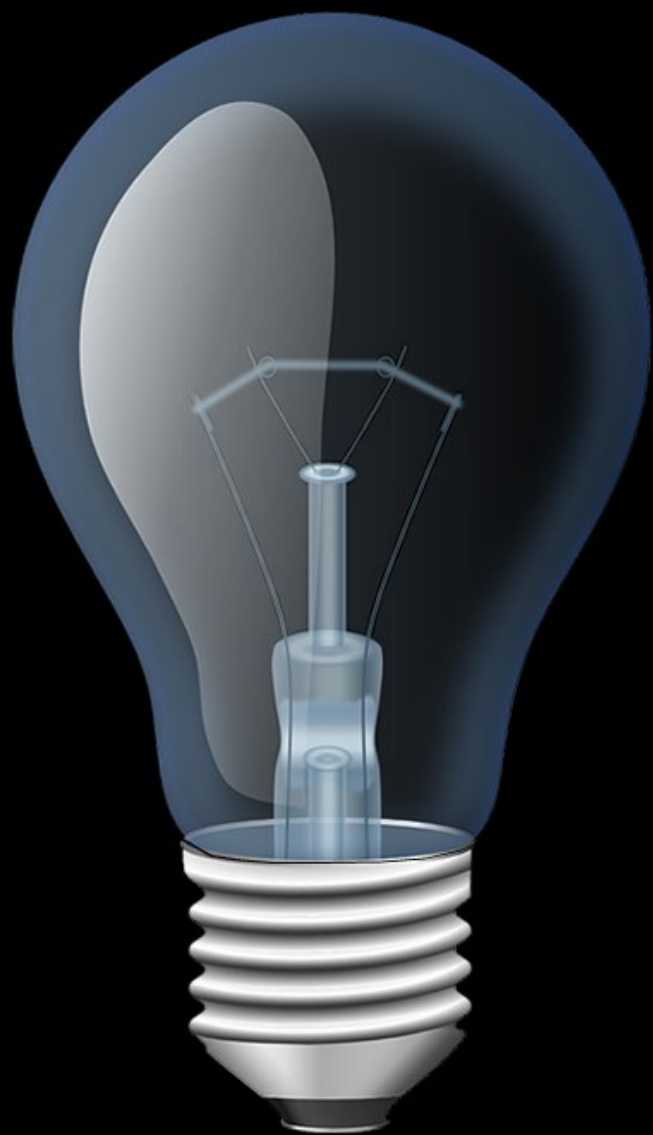


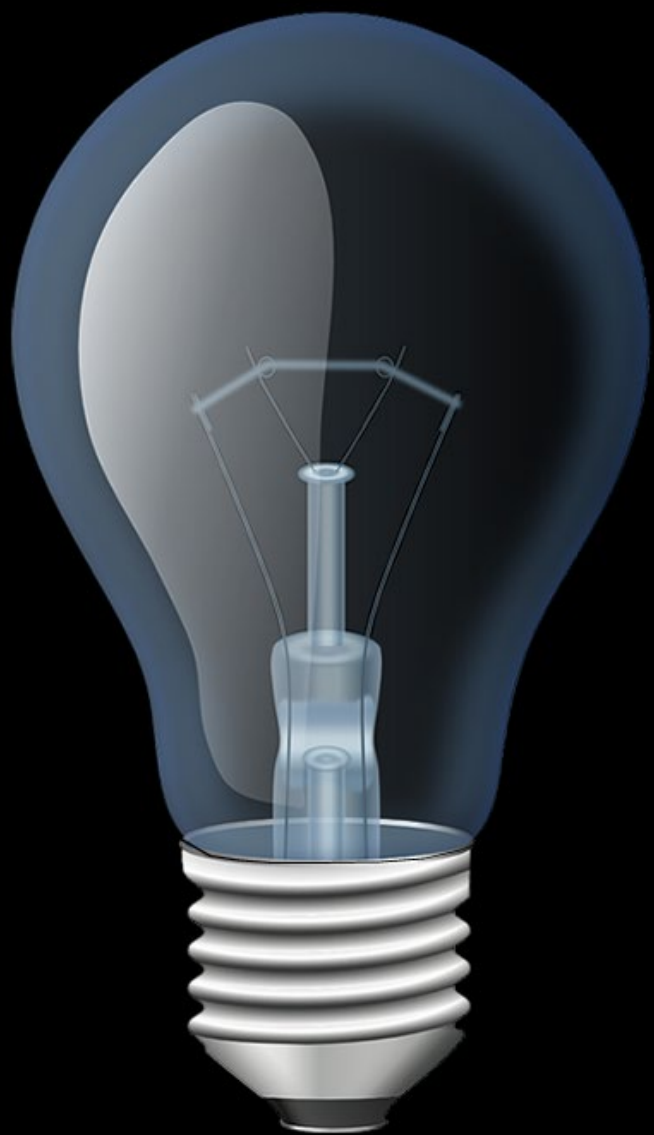


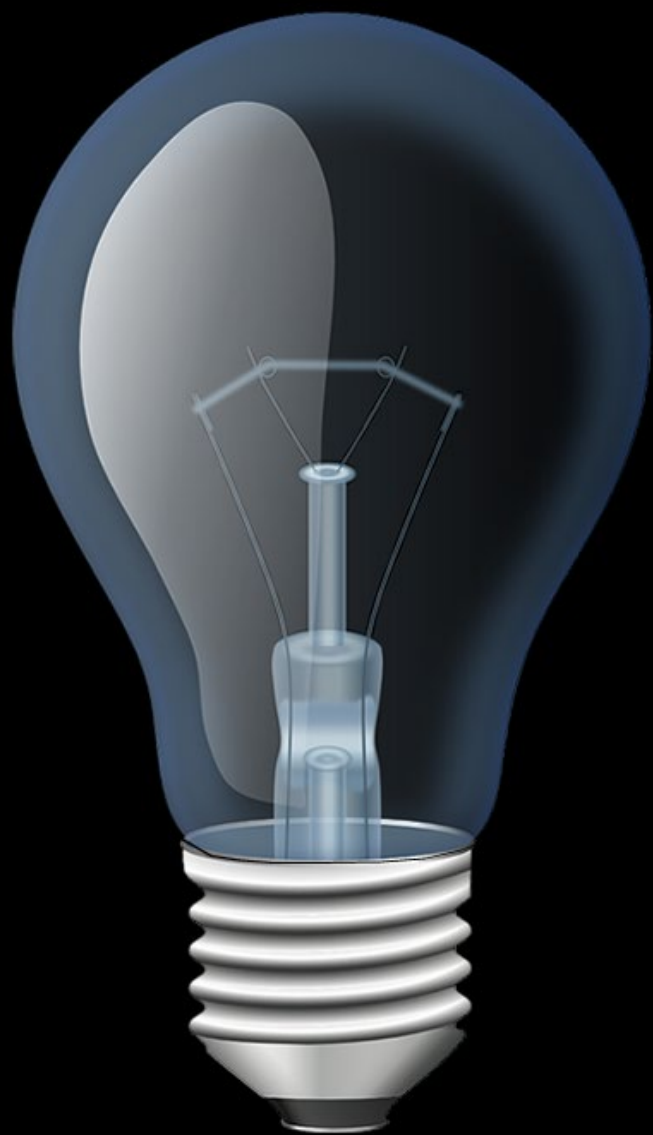


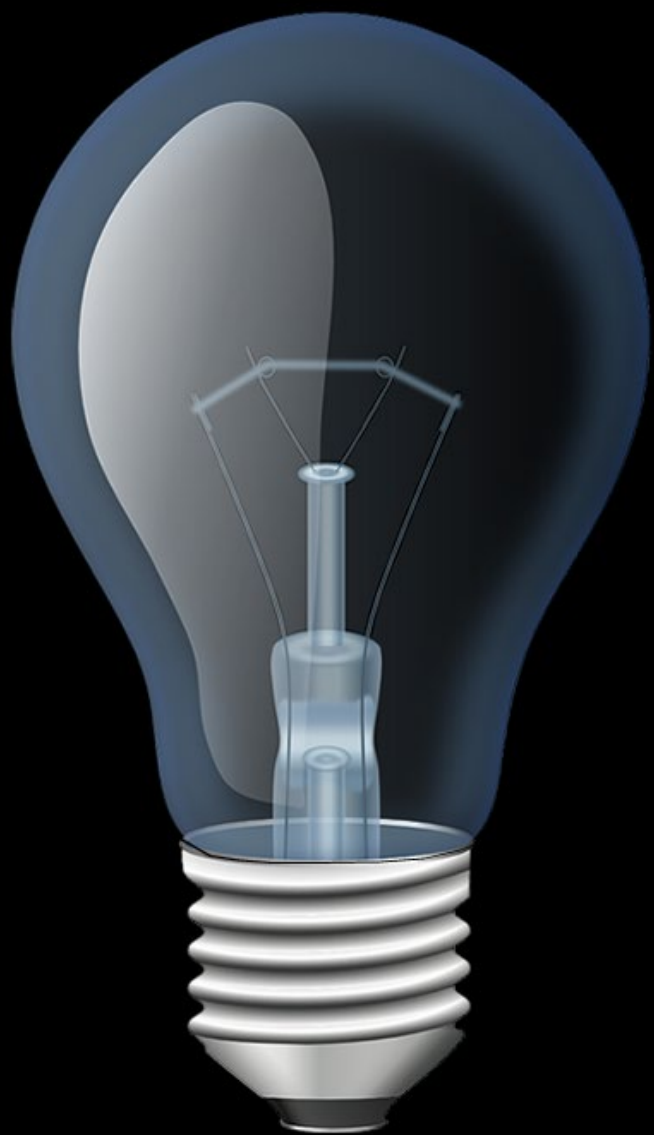




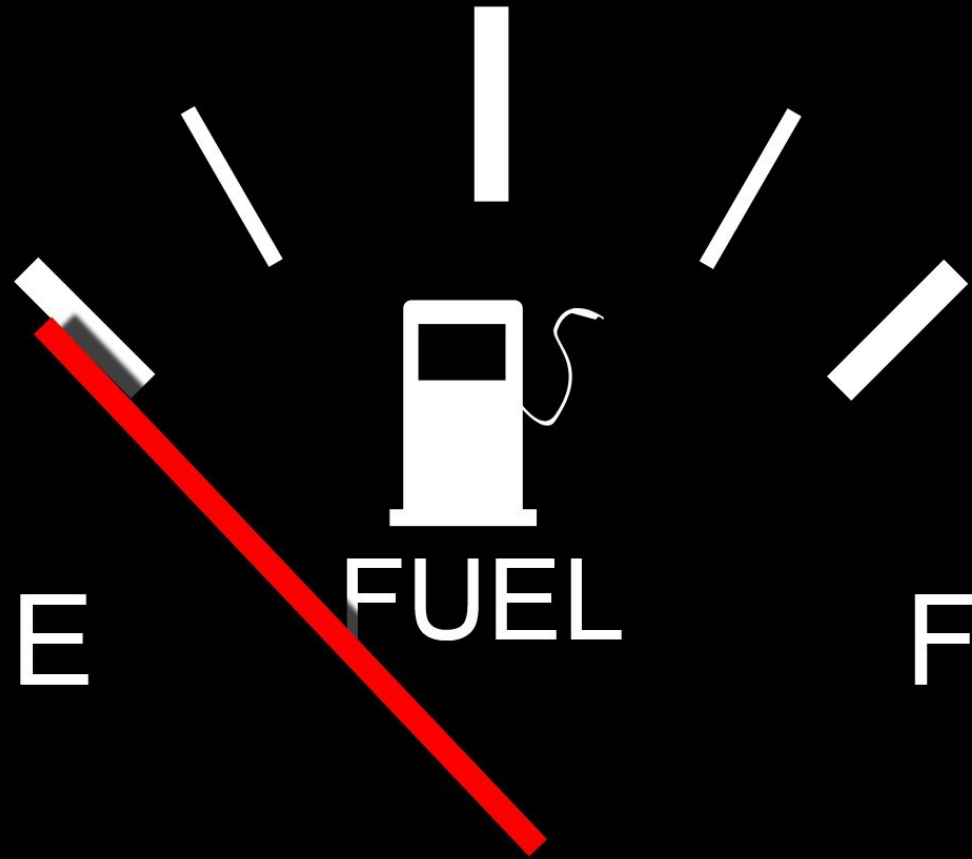












Multitasking burns up oxygenated glucose—the same fuel you need to deeply focus and do your best work.



Effects on Cognition & Productivity

Mental Disorganization

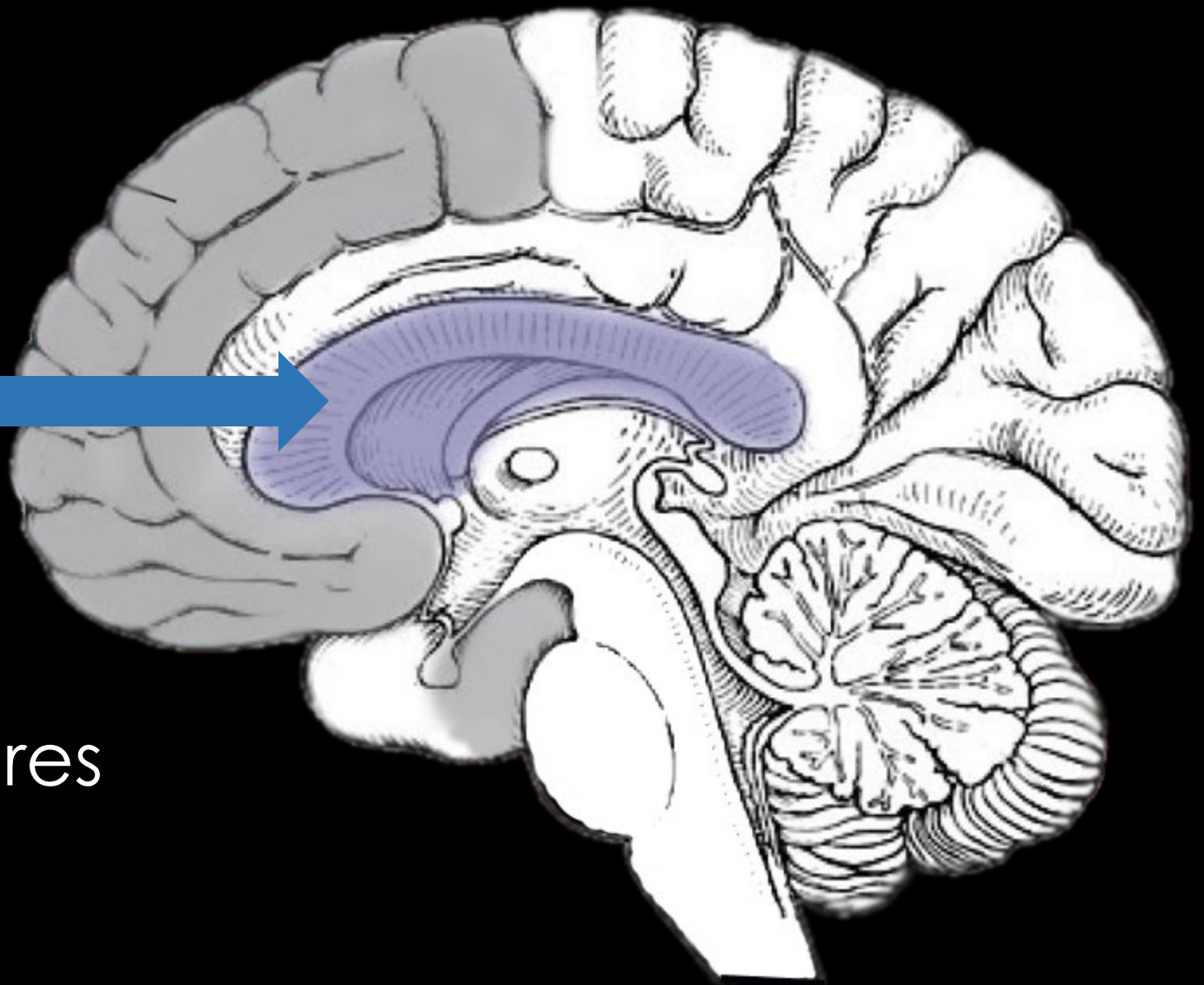


Dr. Russ Poldrack
Stanford University

Multitasking while learning
information causes the new
information to go to the
wrong part of the brain

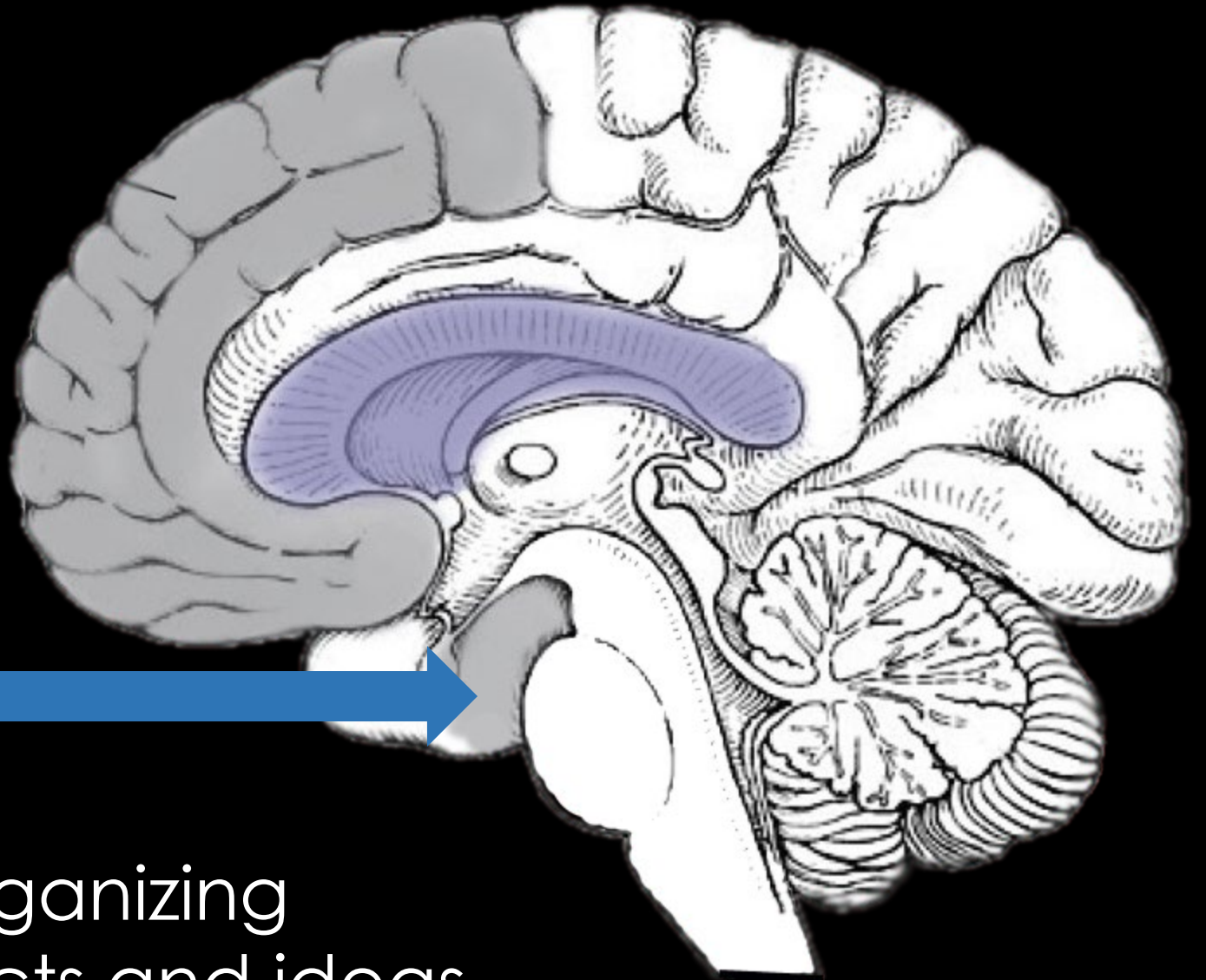
Striatum

A brain region for
storing new procedures
and skills—not facts
and ideas



Hippocampus

A brain region for organizing
and categorizing facts and ideas



Loss of IQ Points



**UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON**



More Mistakes



Dr. John Medina
Author of Brain Rules

Multitaskers make up to **50% more errors** than those who are not multitasking.

“Inattentional Blindness”



75% of students with cell phones didn't see the clown!



Decreased Productivity

- A 2001 study by Rubinstein, Evans, and Meyer suggests that people who multitask can reduce their productivity by as much as 40%
- Medina founds that multitaskers take *50% longer* to accomplish a single task



Multitasking Challenge



Your Multitasking Challenge



Read Email

Listen to a Discussion

Good afternoon, everyone.

Since Susy will be on vacation next week, I will be coordinating our next employee forum. Thus, I am requesting items a bit earlier than normal.

Please send me your August 2nd forum agenda items by this Thursday, July 27th. Please advise if there will be any external speakers in attendance. I am aware of one guest speaker from IT, Chris Thomas, who will present on Phishing emails. Chris, I have attached our forum template. Please use it to build your slides.

In addition, please send me your slides on Friday, July 28th by noon. I have attached a list of agenda items from our last forum. ~ Kathy

Previous Agenda Items

- **Hiring process changes (coming soon)**
- **Benefits reminders**
- **Training system upgrade**
- **New manager training program**
- **Faculty and staff satisfaction survey**
- **Important dates**

Good afternoon, everyone.

**Since Susy will be on vacation next week, I will be
concerned. I am**

Please approve time now.

**Attention: You have two employees
with vacation time that needs to be
approved in the system. Please do so
by 8:30 a.m. Thank you!**

~ Steven

from our last forum. ~ Kathy

Previous Agenda Items

- **Hiring process changes
(coming soon)**
- **Benefits reminders**
- **Training system
upgrade**
- **New manager training
program**
- **Faculty and staff
satisfaction survey**
- **Important dates**

Please Begin Your Quiz Now



Directions:

Jot down your answers to the following questions on a scrap piece of paper or on your computer.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. When does Kathy need your slides for the forum?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>2. What criteria will the governor's team use to select success stories to highlight in their state's promotional video?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Tax savings, efficiency, and economic impactB. Diversity, innovation, and economic impactC. Affordability, innovation, and economic impactD. Campus climate, multiculturalism, affordability, innovation, and economic impact <p>3. How many employees need their time approved and what is your deadline?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>4. Who will be the guest speaker at the next forum?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Tom JohnsonB. Chris ThompsonC. Thomas JamesD. Chris Thomas <p>5. When does Kathy need your forum agenda items?</p> | <p>6. Departments interested in being featured in the governor's video should apply where?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. stgov-videocompetition.comB. stgovvideo.comC. stexcellence.comD. stgovexcellence.com <p>7. Which of the following will NOT be a topic at the next HR forum?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Training system upgradeB. Faculty and staff surveyC. Benefits remindersD. Changes to payroll process <p>8. According to the meeting facilitator, which website recently gave their school some high rankings?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Schools-excellence.comB. Forbes.comC. Schools.comD. Bestcolleges.com <p>9. What is the application deadline for the governor's video project?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>10. What cash award will departments receive for being selected for the governor's video?</p> |
|--|--|

Answer Key

1	7/28	6	D
2	B	7	D
3	2, 8:30 a.m.	8	A
4	D	9	11 days from now
5	7/27	10	\$2500

Poll Question: What was your quiz score?

- A. 80% or higher
- B. 70%
- C. 60%
- D. 50%
- E. 40% or lower

Debrief Questions

- ❑ What was your experience like as you tried to do these two activities simultaneously?
- ❑ Where did your mind focus the most?
- ❑ What were your challenges?



Stress, Decision Making & Creativity

Increased Stress



Cortisol

Adrenaline

Overstimulation

Mental fog

Scrambled thinking

Increased Stress



Drs. Stephen Voida & Gloria Mark
University of California



Impulsive Decision Making



Diminished Creativity



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO



Multitasking

**Working
Memory**



Creativity

Diminished Creativity



THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO



Multitasking

**Working
Memory**



Creativity



**Can I listen to music at work?
Aren't women better at this?**

Can I Listen to Music While I Work?



Dr. Joanne Cantor
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Music can help or hinder your work depending on the nature of the task you're trying to perform and the nature of the music.

See page 6 for helpful chart.

1

If you're doing a repetitive task requiring focus but not much cognitive processing, you can use upbeat music to boost your energy and focus.



2

If your task necessitates cognitive processing or creativity, use motivational music beforehand and during breaks.



3

With high-information-processing tasks, monotonous, zen-like background music can promote better performance on cognitive tasks.



For problem-solving or highly cognitive, complex tasks, avoid popular music with lyrics.



Are Women Better Multitaskers Than Men?

Women 'better at multitasking' than men, study finds

By James Morgan
Science reporter, BBC News

🕒 24 October 2013 | [Science & Environment](#)

[f](#) [🐦](#) [💬](#) [✉](#) [Share](#)



From the Article:

Men and women were equal when tasks were tackled one at a time. But when the tasks were mixed up there was a clear difference.

Both women and men slowed down, and made more mistakes, as the switching became more rapid. But the men were significantly slower—taking 77% longer to respond, whereas women took 69% longer.

Both Performances are AWFUL

Men

Women

10

20

30

40

50

60

70

80

90

100

Both Performances are AWFUL

Men

Women

10

20

30

40

50

60

70

80

90

100

Both Performances are AWFUL

Men

Women

10

20

30

40

50

60

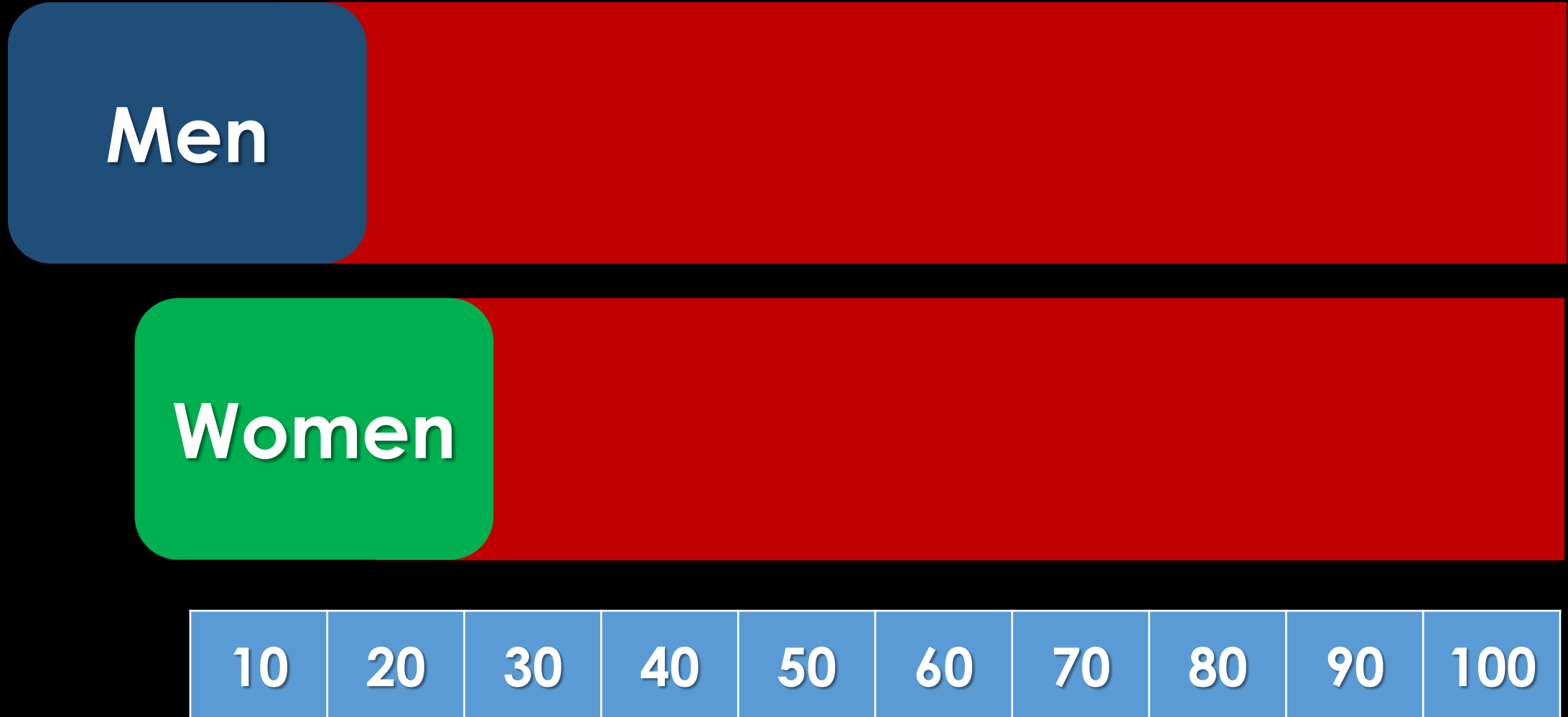
70

80

90

100

Both Performances are AWFUL

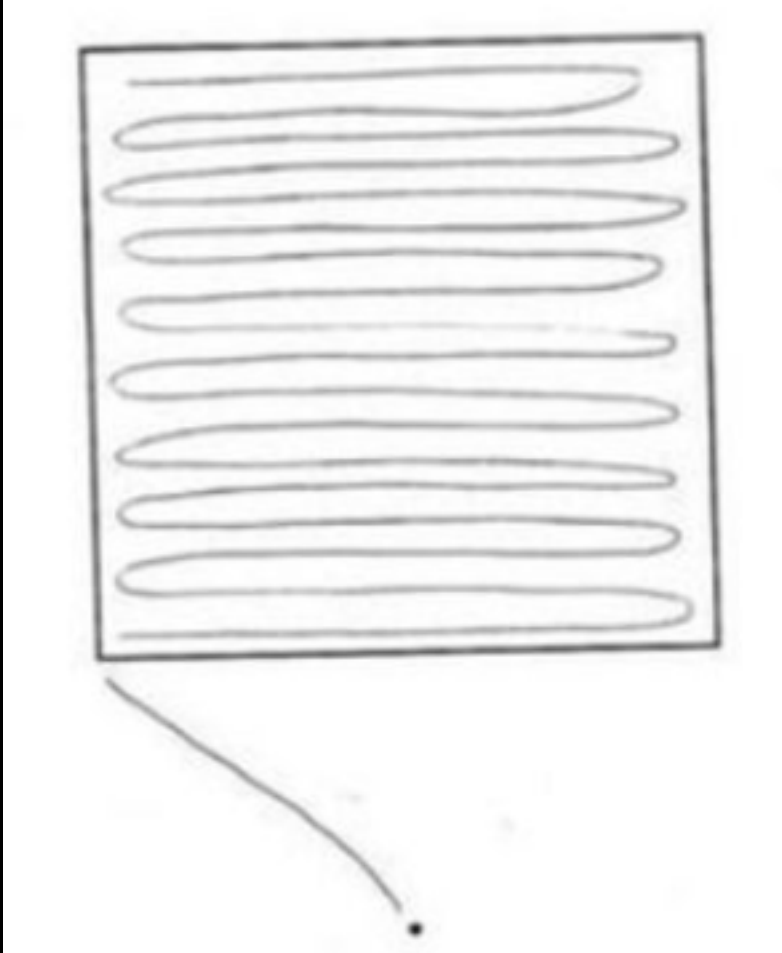


What About *After* Multitasking?

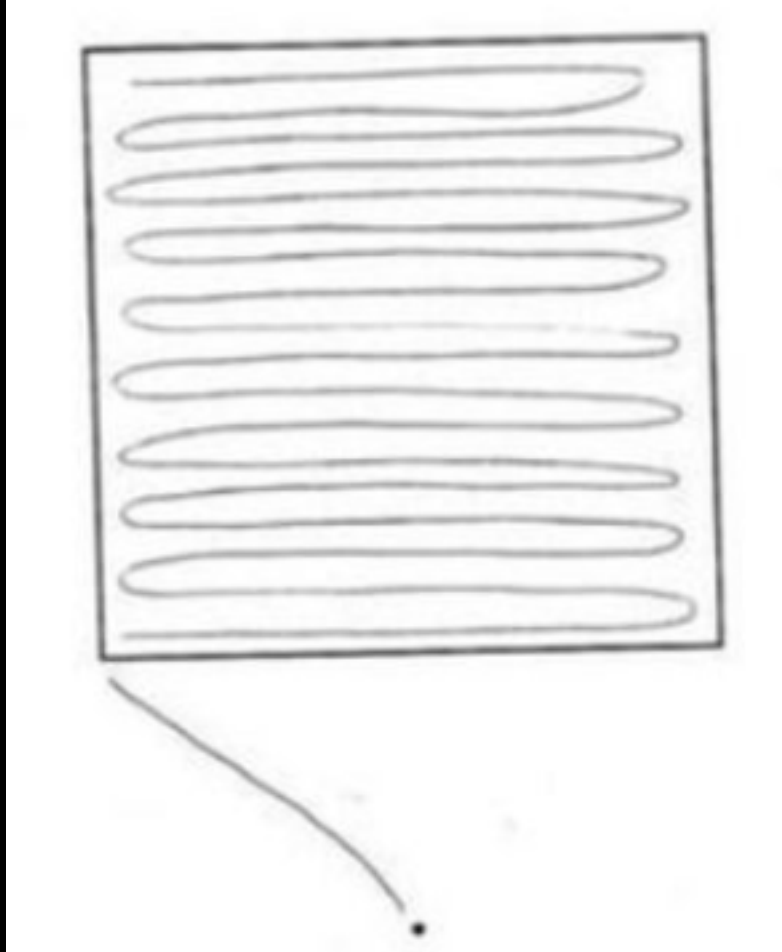




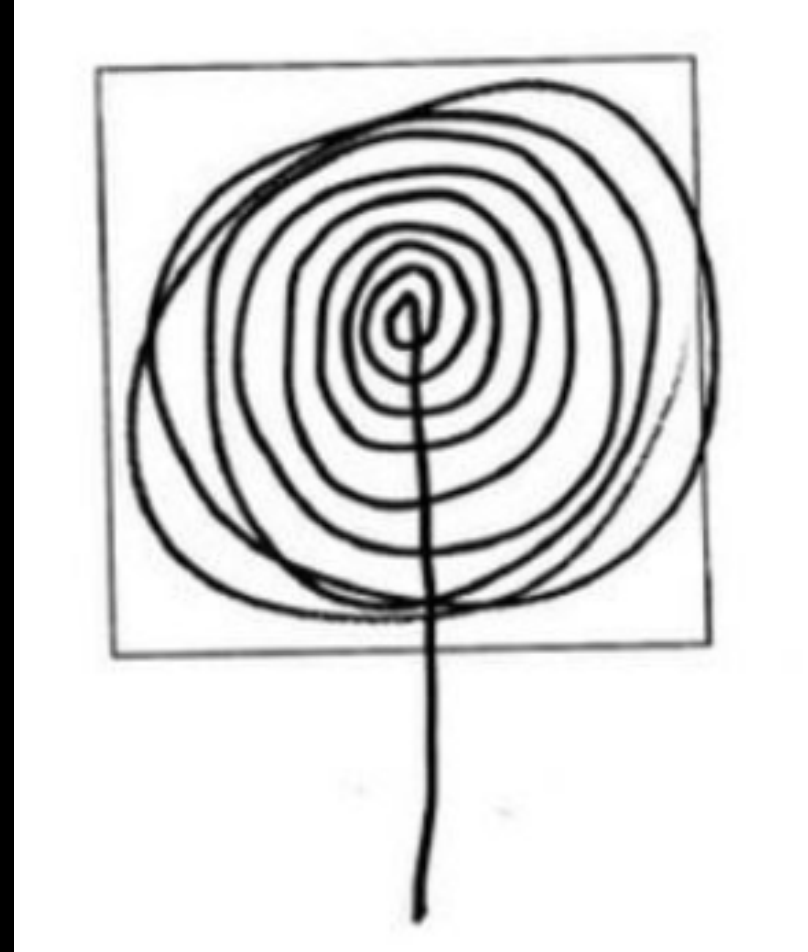
Women



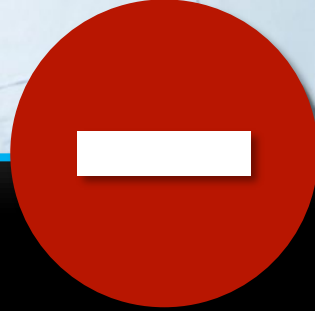
Women



Men



What About *After* Multitasking?



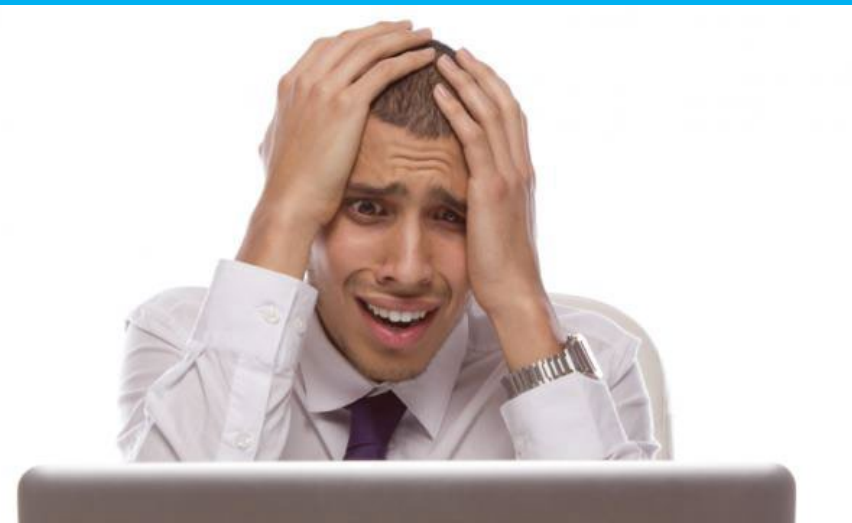


Multitasking Recap

- 1 Multitasking = switch tasking.
- 2 Only 2-3% of the population can multitask well.
- 3 Multitasking negatively affects cognition, accuracy, productivity, decision making, stress, and creativity.
- 4 Listening to music while working = multitasking.
- 5 Both men and women are awful multitaskers, but women tend to outperform men *after* multitasking.

Multitasking Challenge







Question & Answer

What are some of the aspects of your work that pull you into a multitasking workstyle?

What are some of your strategies for increasing focus and maximizing your productivity?

What implications does this multitasking research have for how we (as HR professionals) approach our work in areas such as:

- Onboarding
- Performance management
- Leadership development



Handout & More Strategies

Thank You!



Webinar

Q & A

Scott Blades, M.Ed.

Assistant Director, Training & Organizational Development
University of Florida

sblades1@ufl.edu

KNOWLEDGE | RESOURCES | ADVOCACY | CONNECTIONS



Thank You!

The Mirage of Multitasking: Find Your Focus, Flow
and Finish Line

March 21, 2019

Sponsored by  **cornerstone**

The logo for Cornerstone, featuring a blue square with a white diagonal line and the word "cornerstone" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font.

KNOWLEDGE | RESOURCES | ADVOCACY | CONNECTIONS