TAKING BREAKS: WHAT WORKS (AND WHAT DOESN’T)

A good break is one that gives your brain a chance to re-set, to shake off the fatigue that comes from doing the same thing for a prolonged period of time. It should be between 5-15 minutes, depending on your level of fatigue. Examples include:

- Doing stretches or other physical “wake-up” activity
- Getting some fresh air (e.g., a walk around the building)
- Rinsing your face (great for early/late studying)
- Getting some refreshment (a quick, light snack or drink)
- Visiting briefly with someone who is supporting you in your study and will make sure it is brief and keeps you motivated

Not recommended are things that either pull you away from your commitment to ongoing study time or put a strain on your physical ability to continue after the break:

- Turning on the TV—it’s too easy to let it stretch into “just one more show”
- Turning on the computer (“I just want to check my FaceBook page…”)—time can lose meaning once you’ve logged on, can’t it?
- Grabbing a magazine to read “just one article”—while taking a break to read something brief can be a reasonable break activity, if you are already in heavy-duty reading for study, this just adds to the fatigue. Calling a loved one—you can get distracted for longer than break time unless that person is part of your “get back to work” plan (and knows not to push any buttons while you talk…a tall order)
- Indulging in food or drink that makes you sluggish (e.g., cramming a quick dinner into that 15-minute slot—instead, schedule your meal within a longer break, 30-60 minutes)