



**UW PACC**

Psychiatry and Addictions Case Conference

UW Medicine | Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences

# NON-PHARMACOLOGIC STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING DIFFICULTY CONCENTRATING

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# SPEAKER DISCLOSURES

- ✓ Any conflicts of interest?

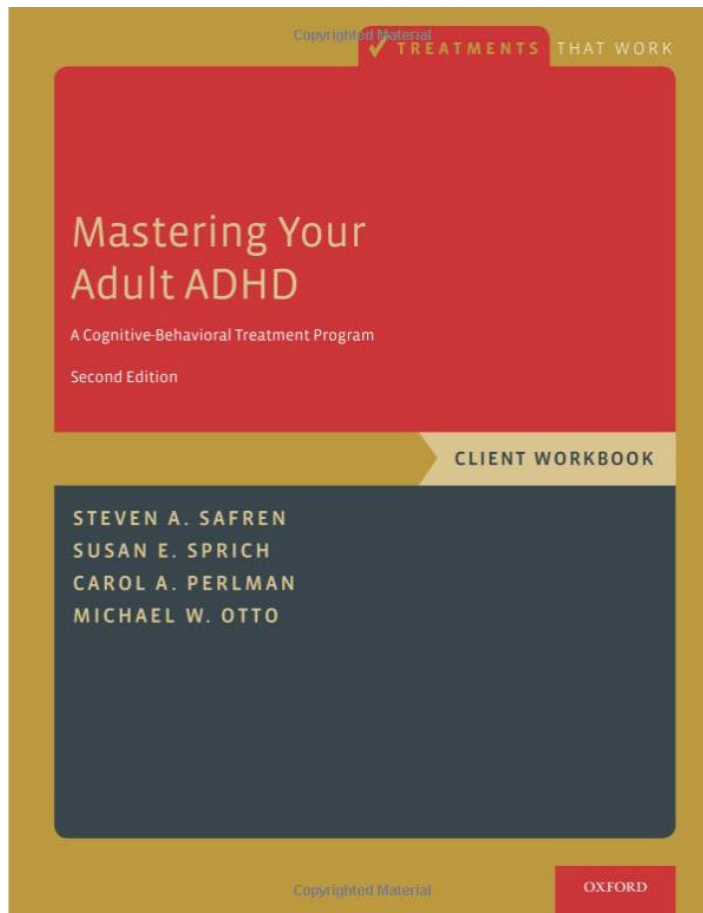
# CONCENTRATION HYGIENE

- Like we help our patients develop good sleep hygiene let's help our patients to develop good “concentration hygiene”
- Even when medication works well, it doesn't usually eliminate all ADHD symptoms
- Objective: Gain confidence in your ability to offer self-care advice to patients complaining of difficulty concentrating impacting their ability to function at school, work, or home

# AGENDA

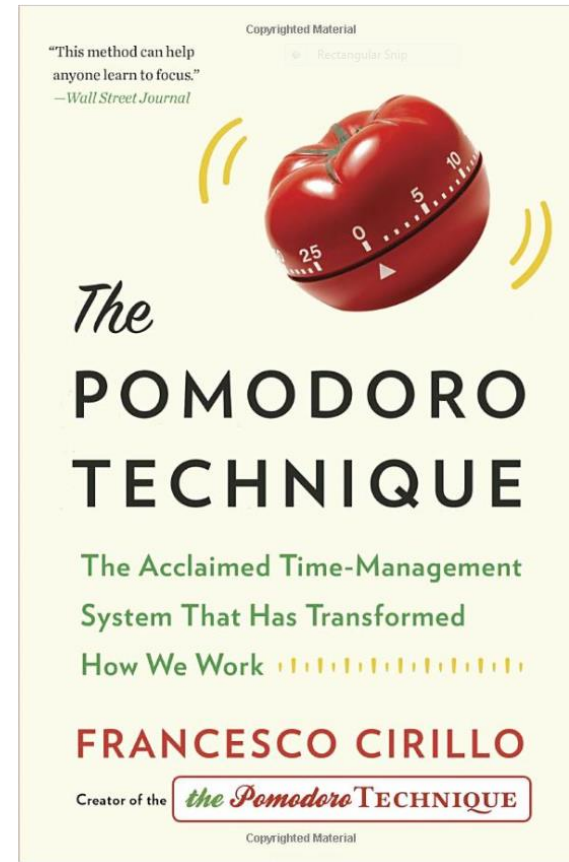
- CBT techniques and Pomodoro
- Larger societal and economic trends which may impact concentration
- Screen Time Management
- Sleep
- Exercise
- Work environment management
- Diet
- Substances
- Bibliotherapy
- History of Medicine Trivia (for fun)

# CBT WORKBOOKS



- Ask about use of calendar
  - Do they check it every morning?
- Ask about use of to-do lists
  - How big is each item?
- Ask about use of alarms and reminders
- **Can they break big goals down into small steps?**
- Make a list of procrastination pros/cons with them

# THE POMODORO TECHNIQUE



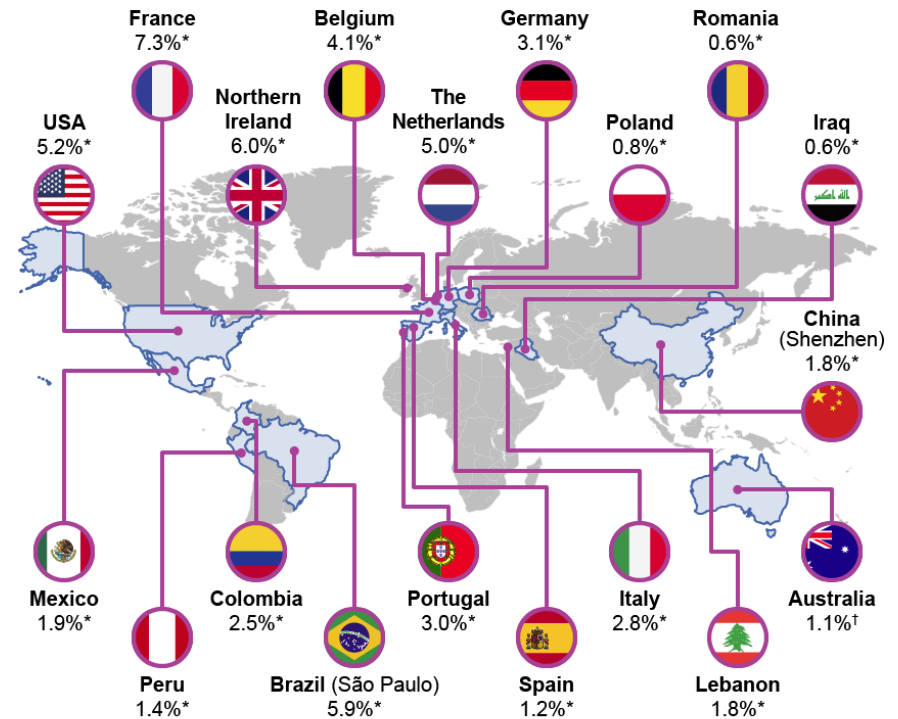
# THE POMODORO TECHNIQUE

- The Pomodoro Technique is simple and concrete
  - Do one thing for 25 minutes
  - No checking text messages
  - No checking email
  - No getting a drink of water
  - No using the restroom
  - When the timer goes off take a 5 minute break and then do another 25 minute segment
  - can modify time segment up or down
  - especially powerful when combined with breaking goals down into 25 minute segments

# RISING ADHD DIAGNOSESE AND STIMULANT USE

- Stimulant use doubled in the US in the decade between 2006 and 2016, from 24 metric tons to 47.4 metric tons

(Piper BJ, Ogden CL, Simoyan OM, Chung DY, Caggiano JF, Nichols SD, et al. (2018) Trends in use of prescription stimulants in the United States and Territories, 2006 to 2016. PLoS ONE 13(11): e0206100. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0206100>)



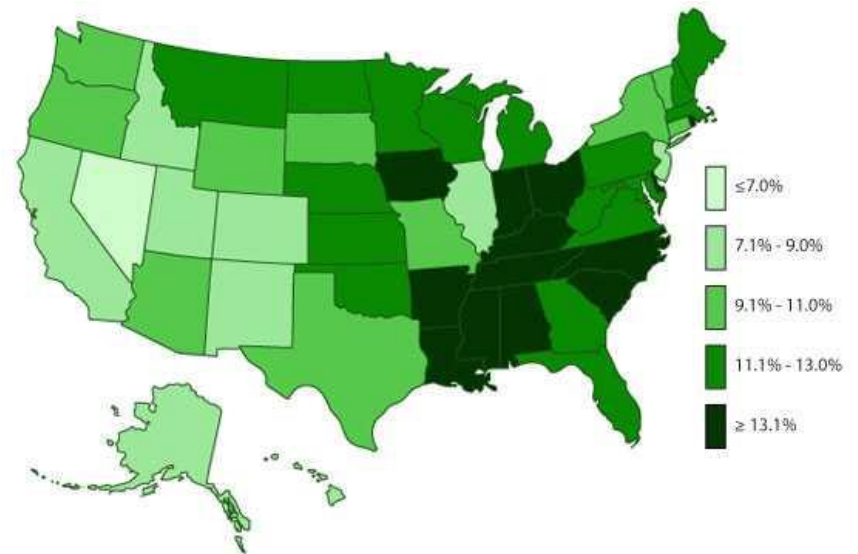
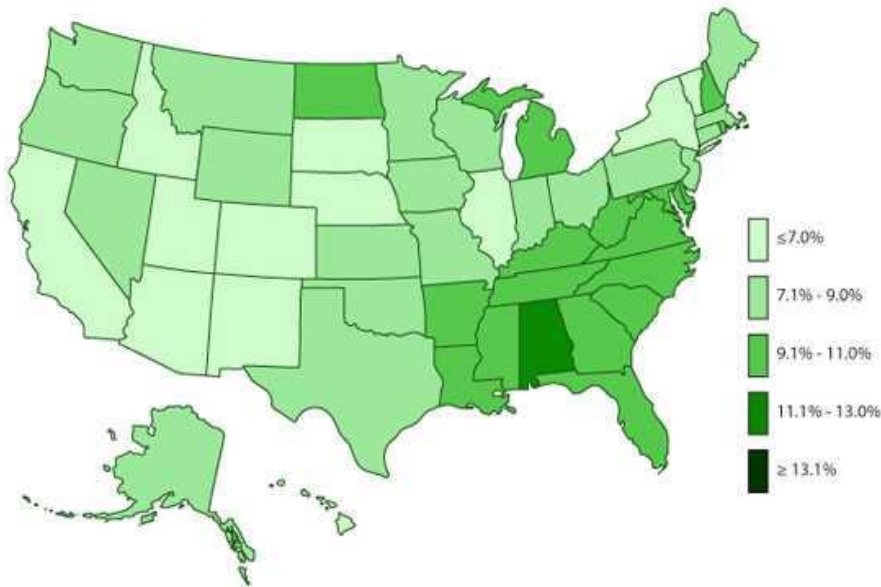
\*Data taken from Fayyad J et al 2017\*  
†Data taken from Ebejer JL et al 2012†




# RISING PEDIATRIC ADHD DIAGNOSES

2003

2011



Source: CDC



Why do I have so many patients on my schedule complaining of difficulty paying attention?

Are they drug seeking? Wanting performance enhancement?

What are the economic circumstances in which my patients are presenting to me?

# THE “ATTENTION ECONOMY”

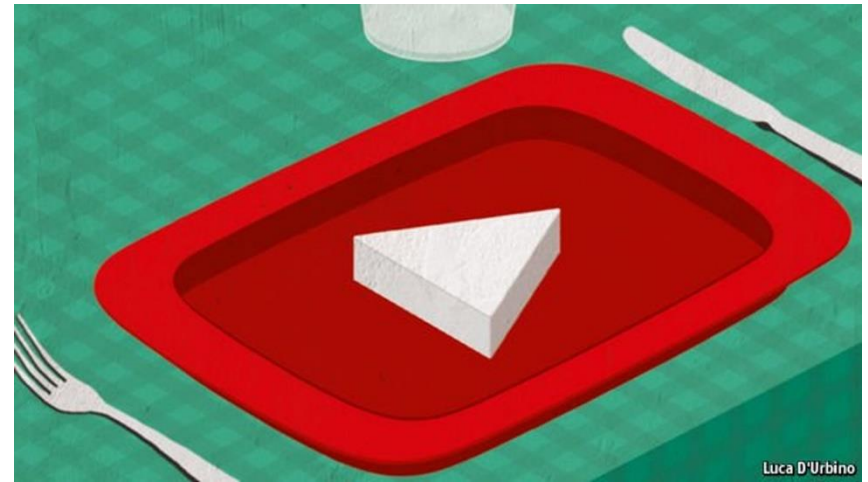


Herbert Simon, economist and psychologist, winner of the 1978 Nobel Prize in Economics

- “Human Beings, viewed as behaving systems, are quite simple. The apparent complexity of our behavior over time is largely a reflection of the environment in which we find ourselves.”
- “A wealth of information creates a poverty of attention.”

# THE ATTENTION ECONOMY

- In 2017 The Economist estimated the size of the Attention Economy at \$6.8 trillion, or 8% of global GDP
- The attention economy uses immediacy and personalization to monetize our patient's eyeballs
- “There is no such thing as a free app”
- “If you aren't paying for the product, then you are the product”



# SCREEN TIME

- Consider asking your patients “When you need to focus on work or school, do you find your devices are set up to help you focus or do they tend to make you more distracted?”
- “How can we engineer your devices to help you focus more effectively?”
- Screen time is pervasive in our modern environments- what is the first thing you look at when you wake up in the morning?
- Bright lights, flashing movements are shown to reduce executive function
- Using screen time (ie social media) during break time may especially decrease concentration
- Turn off notifications on devices

# SCREEN TIME CONT'D

- How often do you need to check your email? Can you check 2-3 times per day instead of every 30 minutes?
- Consider an app to help monitor mobile phone usage- Moment, Breakfree, and Instant can give you feedback about your mobile phone usage
- Consider an app to help block distractions- Freedom, Anti-Social, Leechblock, RescueTime, WriteRoom, and Darkroom are examples



# SLEEP

- speaker notes a high rate of sleep apnea diagnosis in adults complaining of difficulty concentrating, including atypical presentation
- review blood pressures, review BMI
- ask about snoring, daytime somnolence, bruxism/TMJ, headaches, frequent night wakening

# SLEEP CONT'D

- chronic sleep deficit is a top cause of difficulty concentrating, quantify hours per night
- ask about devices in bedrooms
- emphasize sleep hygiene for patients with insomnia



# EXERCISE

- Aerobic exercise is well documented to improve executive function in both children and adults
- Chronic and acute exercise improves executive function for both normal and ADHD study subjects
- Optimal conditions are not known, however
- Frequent, short bursts of aerobic exercise can be used to help with difficulty concentrating, especially for sedentary activities
- You can help patients problem solve how they can work aerobic exercise into their day (“can you wear exercise clothes to work or to study?”)

# WORK ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT

- Trend towards open office environments may be great for collaboration but can be problematic for folks with ADHD
- Can your patient work part of the week in a private office or a conference room?
- Can they put a sign up asking co-workers “Please no disruptions for the next 2 hours” or “I will be available for discussions with co-workers between 3-5pm”
- Natural light vs no natural light, reducing physical clutter, white noise or noise cancelling headphones can be helpful strategies

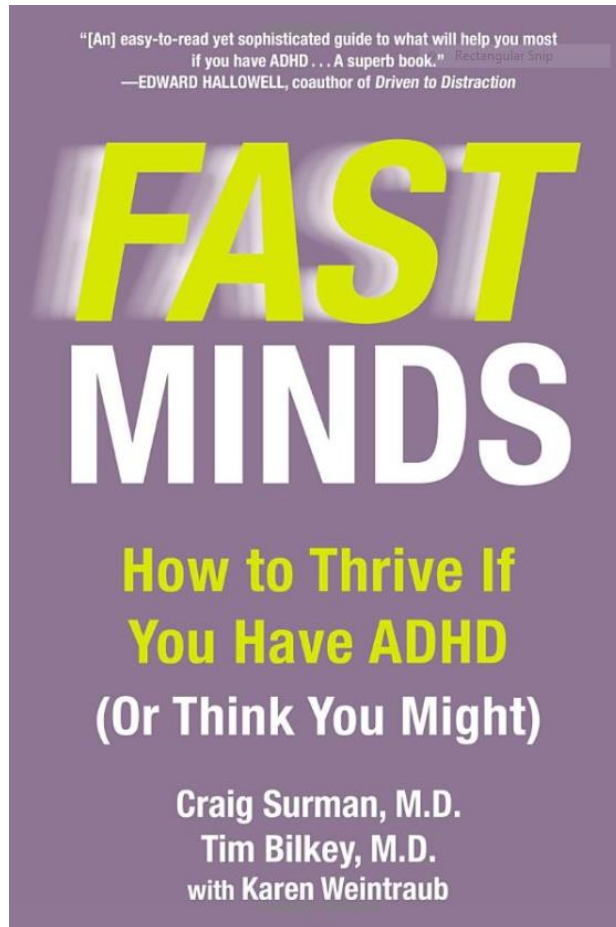
# DIET

- Eating regular meals or snacking during the day?
- Skipping breakfast and/or lunch?
- Not surprisingly, patients who eat only one meal late in the day may have difficulty concentrating.
- In patients treated with stimulant medication, ask about appetite suppression and help them plan to have healthy snacks on hand.

# SUBSTANCES

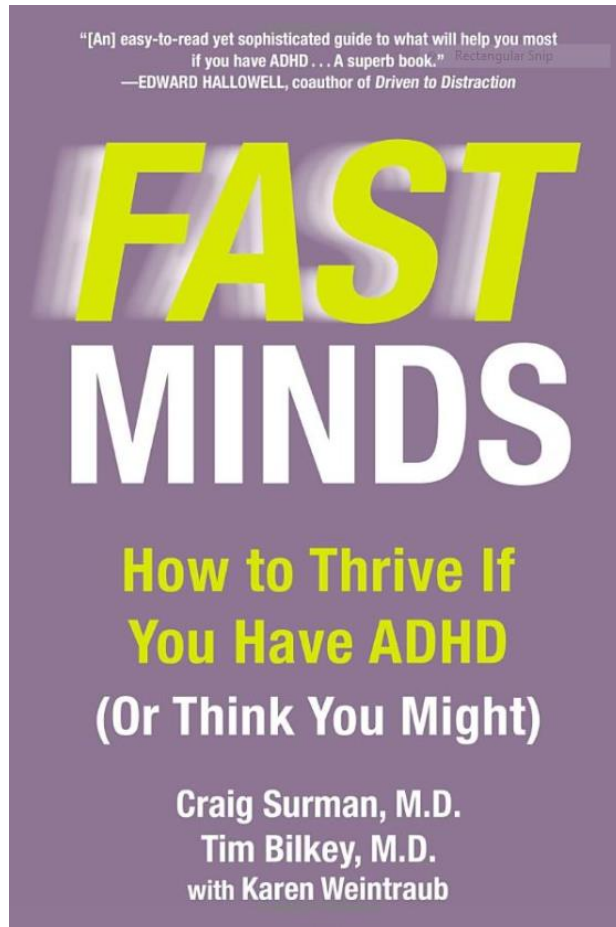
- Caffeine is a methylxanthine and can consider a trial as an alternative to stimulants
- Ask about alcohol, marijuana
- Ask about antihistamines

# FASTMINDS



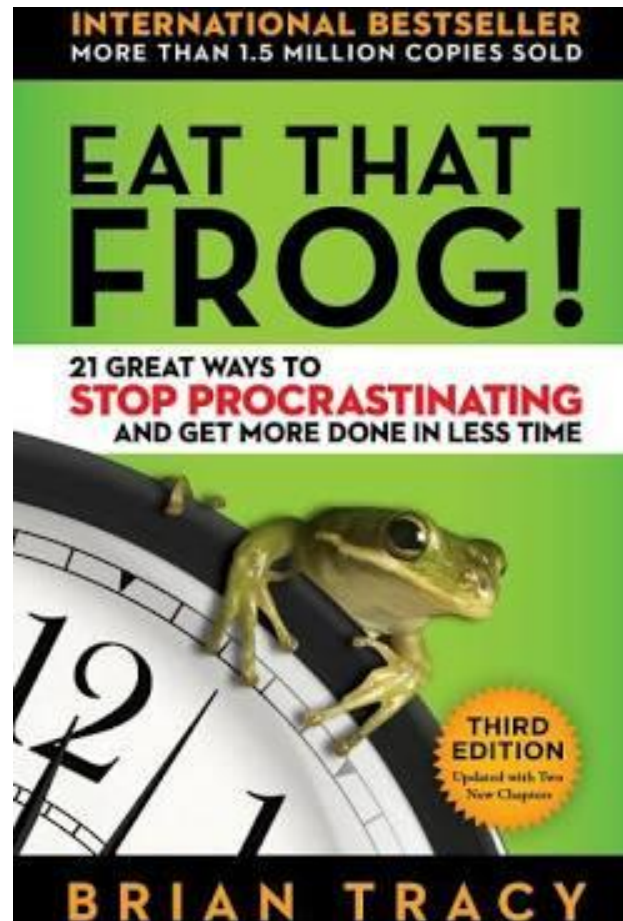
- Forgetful
- Achieving Below Potential
- Stuck in a rut
- Time challenged
- Motivationally challenged
- Impulsive
- Novelty seeking
- Distractible
- Scattered

# FASTMINDS



- When things were going really well in your life, what was it in your external environment that helped you to function?
- Increased exercise?  
Having social outlets?  
Your physical work space?

# BIBLIOTHERAPY



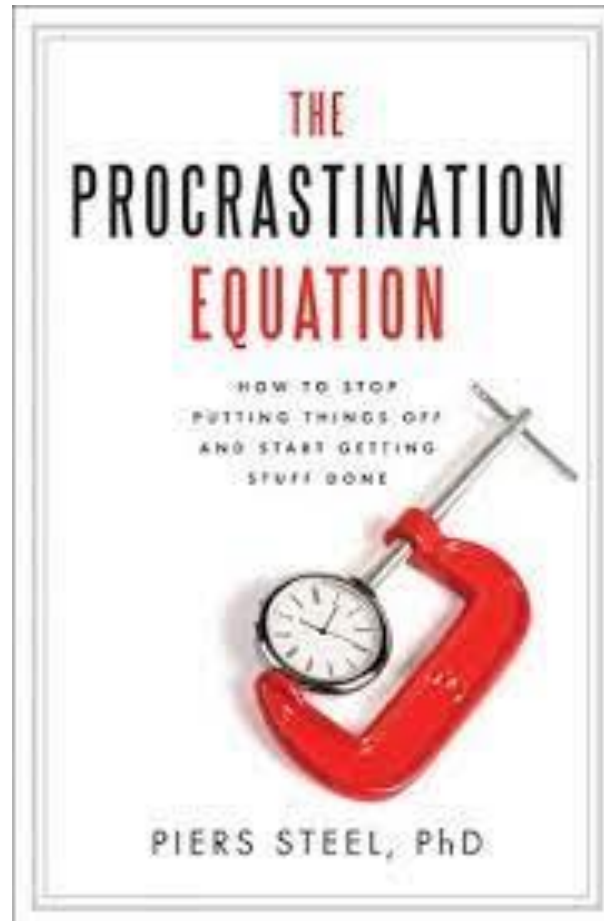
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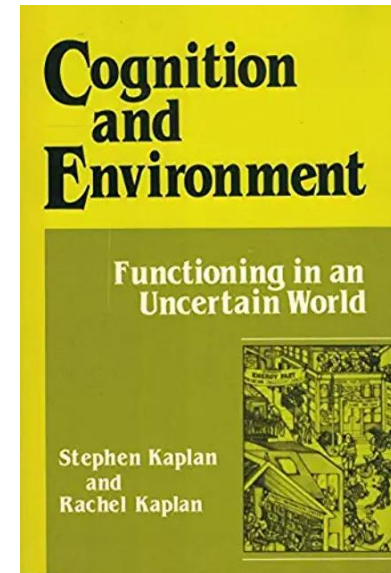
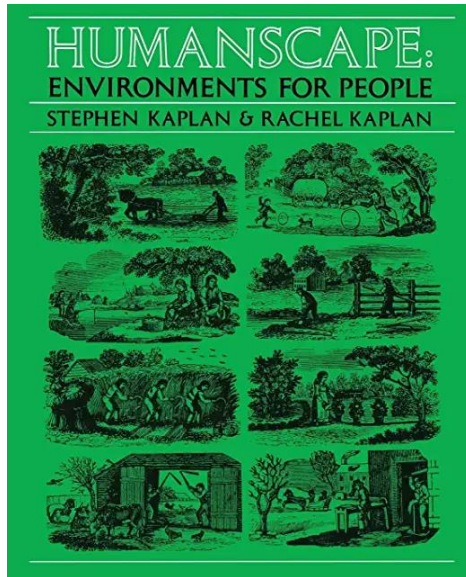
- March 25, 2019 NY Times Article “Why You Procrastinate (It has Nothing To Do with Self-Control)”



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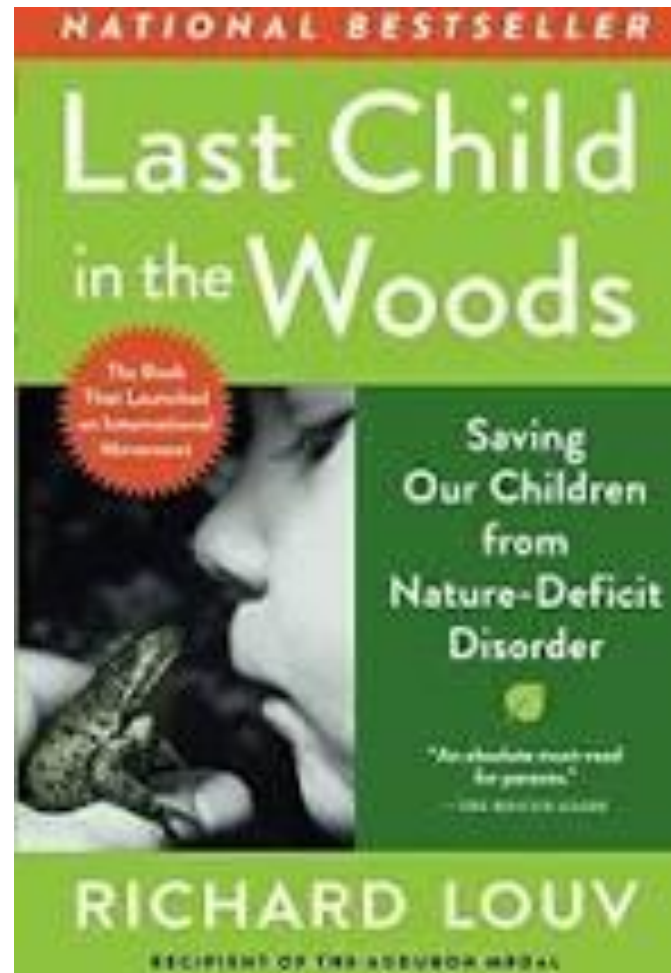


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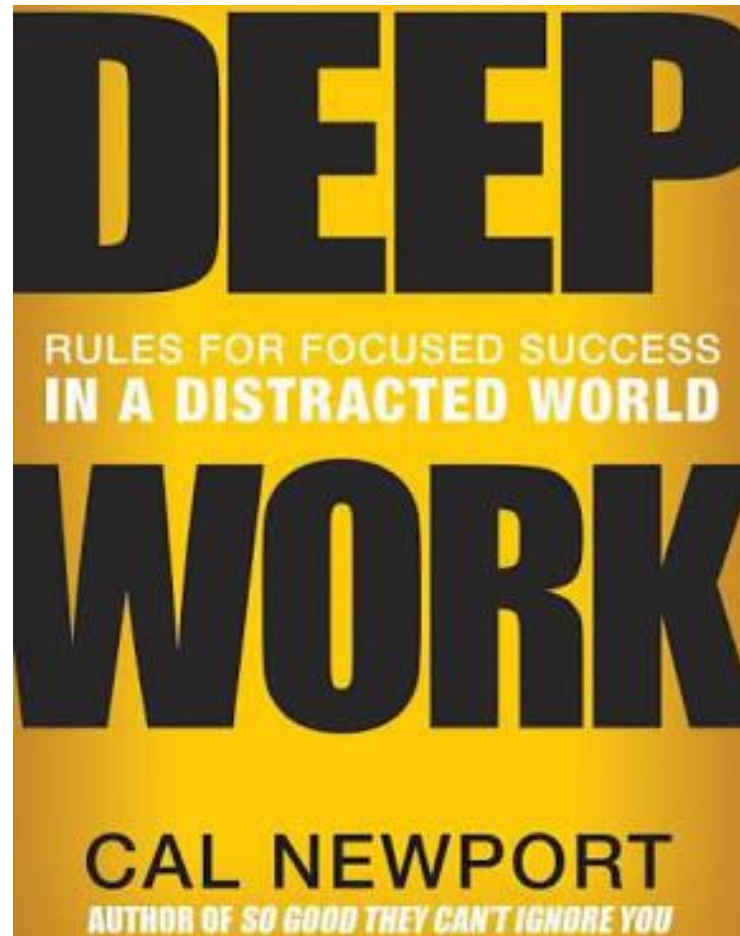


- Attention Restoration Theory from Rachel Kaplan, PhD, and Stephen Kaplan, PhD, both psychology professors at the University of Michigan

# BIBLIOTHERAPY



# BIBLIOTHERAPY



# HISTORY OF MEDICINE TRIVIA: WHAT IS THIS WOMAN'S FIRST NAME AND WHAT DOES SHE HAVE TO DO WITH ADHD?



# HISTORY OF MEDICINE TRIVIA: WHAT IS THIS WOMAN'S FIRST NAME AND WHAT DOES SHE HAVE TO DO WITH ADHD?

- Meet Rita, as in “Ritalin”
- In 1944 her husband, Leandro Panizzon of Swiss company CIBA (now Novartis) invented methylphenidate to help Rita improve her athletic performance

