**Twenty-Five Minute Sprints (The Pomodoro Technique)**

There’s a very famous book by Italian entrepreneur and author Francesco Cirillo called The Pomodoro Technique. Pomodoro is Italian for tomato (the tomato in question is one of those novelty kitchen timers!)

In his book, Cirillo argues that we can generate lots of energy and effort by working in short bursts, even on long tasks that we don’t feel motivated to do. Think of all the tasks you’ve got to do that you just can’t bear to begin – there might be essays to write, jumbled notes to file away or a dissertation to start.

Choose one thing that’s hanging over your head and you just don’t want to do. Make a note of it here:

**Step One**

Now for the tomato. By which we mean getting hold of either a kitchentimer or using the timer on your phone. Try using the app Hold for this. It’s free and blocks your phone for a specific period while you study. As you complete ‘holds’ - periods of distraction-free work – you earn points which give you rewards. There are a number of companies on board, so it’s a compelling way of creating a focus-and-reward culture for yourself.

Next, find somewhere quiet. Arrange the things you need to begin. You’re going to do a twenty-five minute sprint. It’s important to tell yourself this: twenty-five minutes – that's all. You’re allowed no distractions whatsoever in that twenty-five minutes.

Now start the timer and go!

**Step Two**

Congratulations! You’ve got that nightmare task started. All of a sudden, this job is going to seem less frightening. You’ll be able to come back to it.

Some suggestions for adapting the Pomodoro Technique:

1) The Quick Sprint

Try twenty-five minutes on, twenty-five minutes off, twenty-five minutes on. It takes one hour and fifteen minutes in total, and you can do it at a regular time each day.

2) The Serious Sprint

Try twenty-five minutes on, five minutes off, twenty-five minutes on, five minutes off, twenty-five minutes on. It takes about one hour thirty minutes, and is a useful technique for really attacking a difficult piece of work.

3) Try measuring tasks in sprints

How many will it take? This way, you’ll develop a sense of how you work, and you can begin picking off scary tasks more quickly and easily.

4) Try using sprints to review work

Suddenly you’ll find yourself ahead and on top of things. It’s a great feeling!

Setting up a quick sprint

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| Preparation | Twenty-five minutes on | Twenty-five minutes off | Twenty-five minutes on |
| * Find somewhere quiet * Gather everything you need * Put phone on airplane settings * Bring up timer, set countdown and alarm * Tell yourself: ‘just twenty-five minutes. That’s all.’ | * Go! * Imagine it’s an exam * Stay intense and keep going | * Set timer and countdown * Enjoy yourself | * Tell yourself: ‘just one last twenty-five minute blast. That’s all.’ * Put phone back on airplane settings * Return to the task |

Remember, one quick sprint per day for a week is nearly six hours’ study in total.

One serious sprint per day is nearly nine hours’ study per week.

You might want to chunk down large tasks and plan a fifteen or twenty hour week to make sure they get done.