1. **Current learning career and trajectory**

**I’m a 43 year old former youth consultant from Groningen, the north of the Netherlands. I obtained a bachelor’s degree in Social Work in 2013 which was late in life as school wasn’t very appealing to me when I was younger. Due to various reasons. In 2018 I became more and more interested in software engineering. Programming and testing in particular. So I started to learn Python, a programming language, and ultimately decided to make a switch. So I now get to call myself a junior software tester. Being in a completely new field and managing life is tough but I’ve always been open to learning new things as it gives me energy.**

1. **The learning aim that is of importance to me**

**There is a test I have to take in the near future (TMap: test management approach) and I’m learning Python. I’d like to learn to study more effectively and be able to reproduce what I’ve learned.**

1. **Biggest mental challenges in achieving your learning aim.**

**I avoid tasks when they seem boring or complicated and when I don’t know where or how to start. I’m also experiencing difficulties reproducing what I read after longer periods of time. It’s like it won’t stick which is frustrating when there’s 700+ pages to read.**

1. **Outline existing research or learning techniques that are relevant to your challenges.**

**Newport, C. (2016). Deep Work: Rules for focused success in a distracted world. Little, Brown Book Group. As a computer science professor with an interest in the intersection of digital technology and culture he developed the Deep Work Hypothesis: the ability to concentrate without distraction on a demanding task is becoming rare at the same time it is becoming more valuable. Putting in the hard work to cultivate this skill will help people and organizations thrive.**

**Van der Kolk, B. (2015).The body keeps the score. *Mind, brain and body in the transformation of trauma.* Penguin. As trauma impacts body and mind there needs to be attention to syncing body and mind again when treating it. The impact of trauma on mind and brain is as much baffling as it is treatable.**

**Cirillo, F. (2018). The Pomodoro Technique. Maven Publishing. The pomodoro technique is a book about the timer based technique to work on a task with full attention for 25 minutes. Followed by a short break. There’s a longer break after 4 pomodoros.**

**Structuring (planning) my pomodoro blocks and breaks by planning my day beforehand. Planning of tasks throughout the entire week is fundamental to me.**

1. **Applying knowledge of research findings or learning techniques to help me overcome my challenges.**

With my attention deficit comes hyperfocus too. I find the pomodoro technique to be helpful in that way. Without a realistic planning or structure like pomodoro I have a hard time getting started and becoming really engaged, and therefore focused, with what I’m doing. Self-doubt and an inner critic will lead me astray after a bad start and make learning and completing tasks even more difficult. By planning my day and tasks ahead I have oversight. By using the timer with a realistic planning it is easier to start a task as I’ll know what to do. When I’m unsure how to go about something the timer will ‘step in’. I’ll avoid staring at my screen for hours; pomodoro won’t let me. Deep work sheds useful insight on distractions that may occur and how to manage those. A whiteboard will give me instant oversight of tasks and deadlines ahead.

Peer review/feedback to my reflective essay:



**Lalaina Rajohnson**

Hello there, I totally empathize with the being easily distracted part. Beside the pomodoro, one thing that works a bit for me is to write down in a journal what I've done or what I think two/three times a day. It helps me refocus. Nice entry. I'll check Deep Work



very good observations, it has mapped your process, inhibitors and the way to the solution! As Humberto Maturana says, "We are the way, the question and the answer and we know it without understanding it"



**Alex Belov**

Hi Kirsten! Thanks for your fantastic essay. I see that it's very true and the problems you are describing are common and so usual. But it does not mean they are easy to solve. I was impressed by Pomodoro and I see you are as well. According to my experience first 2 years of programming are most difficult. Be permanent with Pomodoro when procrastination arrives and all will be fine. Take care.