



SELF

DRIVEN FROM DISTRACTION

**GOT AN IDEA FOR
A NOVEL OR A NEW
BUSINESS VENTURE BUT
NEVER HAVE TIME TO GET
IT OFF THE GROUND?
A "CAVE DAY" MIGHT BE
THE SECRET TO WORKING
HARDER, FASTER
AND SMARTER**

HOW MANY OTHER THINGS ARE YOU DOING AS YOU READ THIS? If you're like most millennials – who check their phones an average of once every 6.5 minutes – you're likely texting a friend, replying to work emails, deciding what to have for dinner and scrolling through Instagram.

You're not distracted, you're multi-tasking. But according to researchers, this isn't a magic bullet of efficiency. One study found people who multi-tasked were worse at recalling information and made more errors than those who focused on one thing at a time, while another suggested multi-taskers

are 40 per cent less productive than their single-minded counterparts. You think you get more done in less time, but really you're taking longer to produce poorer results than if you'd worked through a to-do list.

The rise of monotasking, aka "single-tasking", has been heralded by high-fliers from Oprah (who recently declared multi-tasking was "a joke") to Arianna Huffington, and there's an array of apps designed to help us focus. However, doing first things first isn't so straightforward when everything from news headlines to open-plan offices are designed to distract. Enter: Caveday.

Co-founded in 2016 by Jeremy Redleaf, a filmmaker who felt his productivity wasn't measuring up to his ambition, Caveday is a pop-up workshop enabling members and drop-ins to do a full day (\$75) or half-day (\$35) of "deep work". Each session is divided into "sprints" of up to 52 minutes (the maximum length of time they say the brain can focus on a single task), punctuated by progress check-ins, relaxation techniques and energy-building exercises. Full-day sessions include two meals, snacks and coffee (no excuses to "pop out for a minute" when the going gets tough) and currently take place in New York, Los Angeles and online. Participants surrender their smartphones and tell the rest of the group – a mix of entrepreneurs, students, podcasters, editors, aspiring novelists and professionals – what they hope to achieve that session.

Redleaf says the sense of ritual, community and accountability is crucial to efficiency, whether you're writing a screenplay or planning a wedding. "People get distracted because doing difficult work is scary and existentially challenging," he says. "We want to feel good and social media and other distractions give us a bigger dopamine hit than confronting hard problems." While distractions can seem insurmountable, banishing your phone, using technology blockers, deciding when you'll start and finish and finding someone else to hold you accountable are good starting points, he says. "There's a growing awareness that when we're left to our own devices – sometimes literally – it's not conducive to becoming the people that we want to be." E