You've said "no" to your team now you must focus on your own tasks! Sometimes it is hard to get things done, with or without distractions. Here's some task management tools to use so you can get your tasks completed and achieve your goals.

Time Management Tools

Calendar:
- The calendar is a great tool for being more organized around, and accountable for, your tasks. Use it to carve out time for important tasks and even use it to create blocks of "quiet time" when you won't accept outside calls, meetings, or interruptions.
- Create tasks in your calendar with realistic time frames for each. Make sure you leave reasonable time for each task, don't just give each task a one-hour block, use 15- or 30-minute slots for short but intense tasks on your list.

Timer:
- Setting a timer can make your task a little more fun. I have a client who plays "beat the clock" when she's approaching dull tasks; this helps enliven her energy around doing them.
- Set a timer to work on a project distraction-free. During these timed bursts turn off your phone and all alerts, lock your door, or even leave the building and work from a coffee shop… all ways to protect yourself from distractions.
- Break up larger, laborious tasks by working in intervals. Set a timer for a 45-minute straight interval with a 15-minute break for calls, emails, or rest. Repeat as needed!

Lists:
- Use a list to keep track of your tasks and when these tasks are competed. Nothing feels better than crossing things off a list and seeing your progress in black and white.
- You can write it (keep a notebook), use an app (Notes or Reminders in your iPhone), or create a log in Word or Excel.
- Add priority to your lists by color coding and add a "due date" to keep you on track.

Organizational tools:
- Use different notebooks, folders, or clipboards for organizing projects or tasks; both digitally and physically. If you're a visual thinker, the more visible your tools, the better.
- Use colored tabs in the computer and sharpies/highlighters/sticky notes to indicate different priority levels, or to differentiate between projects.

Analyze your Loss of Focus:

Physical Stamina:
- Are you getting enough rest, eating well, and staying hydrated at work? If your answer is "no" to any of these, you're working at a deficit. Your brain needs fuel to operate and good fuel to operate well. Coffee will only get you so far, you also need protein and complex carbs for endurance, and lots of water to stay hydrated.
- Ensure you have snacks and a water bottle at work. I know back when I was a hospitality manager when I was getting a little tired, I would crave caffeine, but I would start by having a big glass of water first. Sometimes dehydration makes us sleepy, so water first, then caffeine!

What types of tasks do you usually lose focus on?

- We all have tasks we enjoy and those we detest. It's important to be honest with yourself and identify the tasks that you dread and avoid because we often burn extra energy simply avoiding them. This makes us dull and sluggish thus, we naturally lose focus.
- Once you have identified these dreaded tasks, ask yourself what you need to accomplish them. Besides time, do you need additional resources or additional information to complete it? Once you understand that the task includes additional data or tasks it helps you become more realistic about getting it done in a reasonable amount of time.
- Then, once you've identified the task and the resources needed to get it done, you must create strict timeframes for completion. Write it down or add these increments to your calendar.
- Being accountable to the fun tasks is easy, you think it then you do it. The dreaded tasks require even more accountability because you naturally want to avoid them. But the good news is when you hold yourself accountable and achieve your goal, it's super satisfying. Make sure you acknowledge this moment (goal: reached) with a moment of appreciation for yourself: for what you learned, how you evolved, or how you improved. High fives can be internal too!

What is your best time of day for quick vs. deep thinking?

- There are all sorts of books/blogs/articles about the "best time of day to get things done" but I've noticed that this is a personal thing.
- Essentially, there are two headspaces needed for our work and accomplishing tasks:
  - Strategic, big picture headspace (deep thinking)
  - Agile, detailed headspace (quick thinking)
- How do you know what time is best? Well, you must create awareness… For most people the morning is a great time to get things done because we're generally more refreshed and energetic.
- Notice when you gravitate towards different tasks at different times of the day and then plan future tasks at those times.
  - What I've noticed is that I like to do quick thinking tasks earlier in the day because I am more energetic and need things to be swift and dynamic. I can plow through my to-do list of emails, calls, editing materials, etc. in the earlier hours with ease. On the flip side, I have the bandwidth to sit down and do deeper creative thinking and writing later in the day. My mind is not moving a mile a minute, and this allows me to settle into the task at hand. I attribute this to my years working in restaurants: I'm used to that cadence of getting prepped and ready for dinner service later in the day. Essentially, I'm ready to work in the later afternoon/evening.

Keeping it fun and interesting:

- The most enjoyable tasks have an element of fun or engagement. It's way more motivating to work when a task is compelling, interesting, and thought-provoking, rather than slow, laborious, and tedious. So, how can you make your work more enjoyable?
- Like the "beat the clock" hack above, we can impose fun on our work. Time is motivating and we can also enliven our tasks simply making things graphically (colors, fonts) and technologically (updated apps and tools) compelling. Play with your approach to tasks and figure out the ways that are attractive to you. They do call it work for a reason but a little fun never hurt anything.