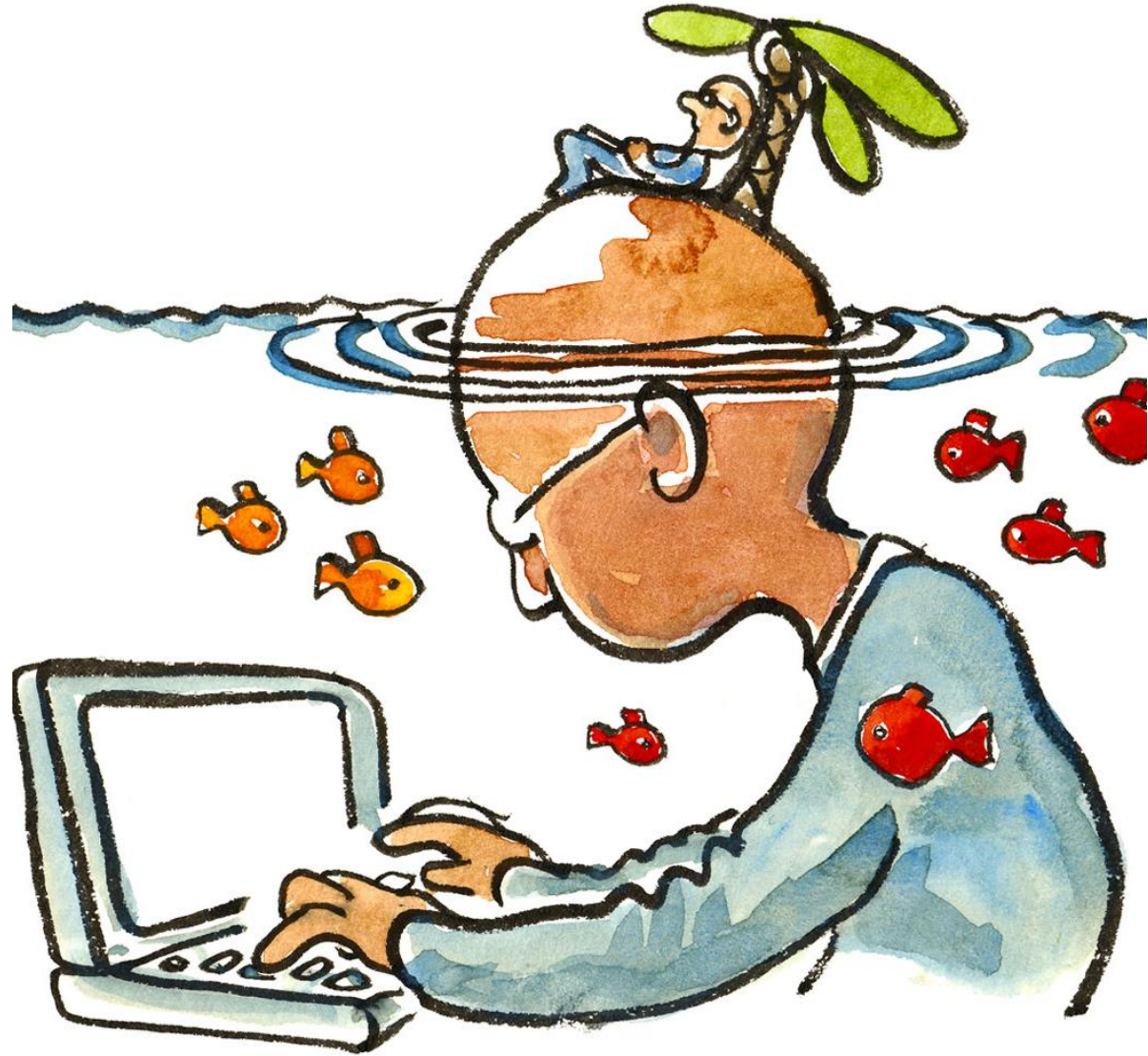


*Distracted
or
Focused?*



Character Values for Children

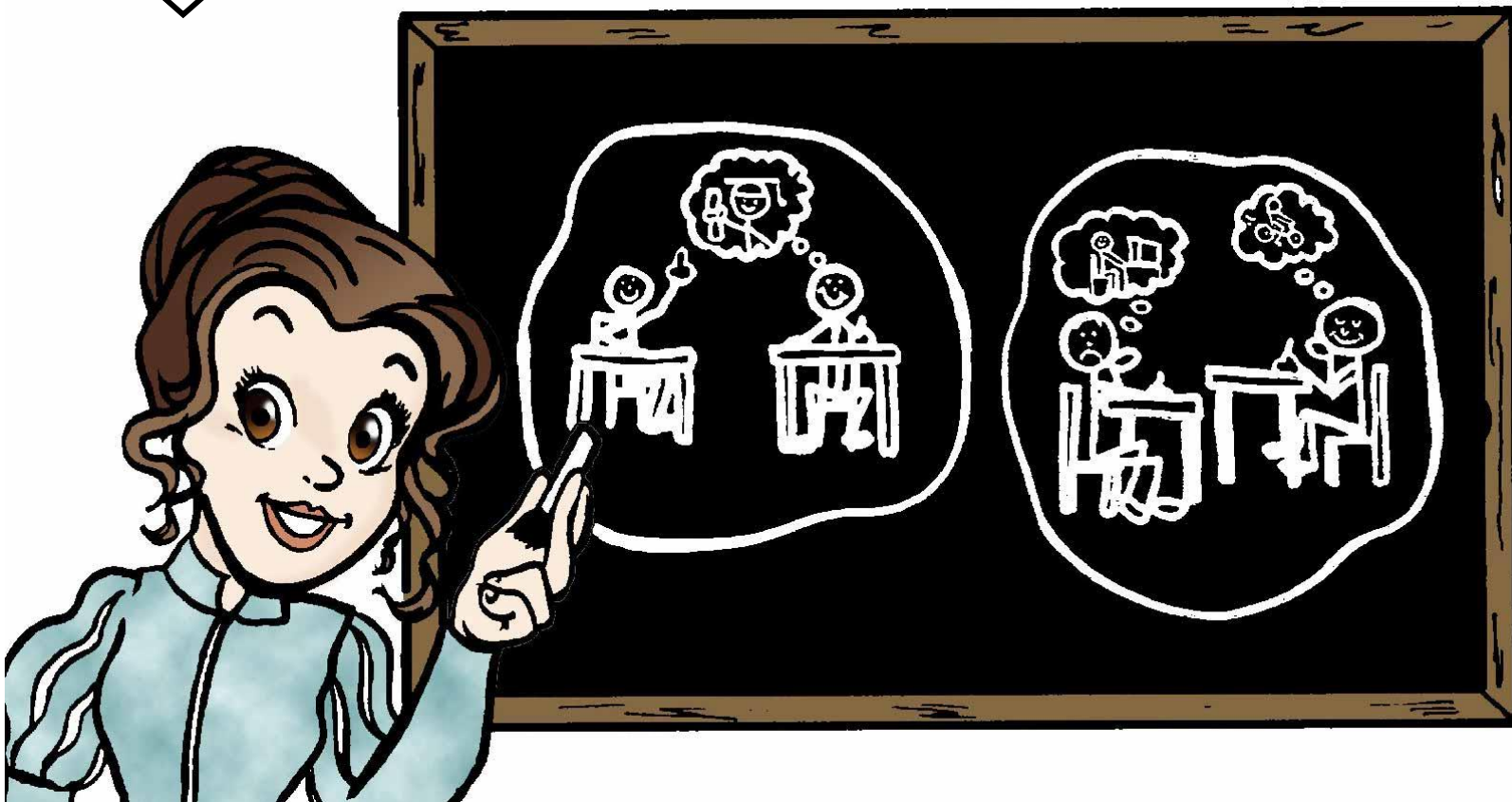
One of the great struggles that many of us face today is giving our focus to what is most important. We are surrounded by distractions on all sides and increasing pulls on our attention. It's hard to buckle down and give full attention to one thing for a period of time without being pulled away by competing interests.

Distractions come in many forms. There will always be a “good reason” for putting off your important project till later. As C. S. Lewis said, “Favorable conditions never come.” We usually have to do our most important work in unfavorable conditions, no matter what. Understanding this truth is key to managing life's prevalent distractions. The alternative is to allow distractions to manage you.



Here are a few tips that I have found helpful in resisting distraction, strengthening my focus, and progressing in my priorities.

- Make a schedule; build a routine. Remember that each day counts toward your larger life goals.
- Tackle the toughest stuff first.
- Offline time is productive time. If you don't have to be online to do your work, get offline.
- Set time limits for breaks and "distraction time."
- Think about how good you'll feel when you're done.



Your focus shapes the course of your life. Every moment of focus you give to your priorities, to the things that matter most, is directly shaping the overall course of your life. That time and effort is being put toward building your future. By the same token, the chunks of time that are whisked away by distractions and unimportant or meaningless activities do not enhance your future or contribute toward your goals; they detract and delay progress.

If our choices are smart ones, made consistently over time, we will eventually reap huge rewards. It's the principle of the compound effect. The challenge is that we don't always see the payoff immediately, the first day or week or even month. Still, each of us has been granted the free will and responsibility to choose what we will and will not focus on every single day. Much more hinges on the choices we make day by day, hour by hour, and minute by minute than most of us probably realize.

