

readjust intelligently. You can consult your study plan to see where there is room for manoeuvre in your schedule. And, if time is running out, your To Do list will tell you which activities to prioritise.

2.3.4 Using time well

It is one thing to plan your time strategically, and quite another to stick to your plans.

“ Why, oh why, when I find three hours of peace and quiet, and all I want to do is write my essay, do I suddenly become hungry? I make myself tip the remains of last night's wine down the sink, then I make that urgent phone call to a friend who was having a downer yesterday. Then I remember some birthdays I mustn't forget ... Off to the loo, as I'm now on my third cup of coffee. The cat has peed in the bath because I forgot to let him out. I might as well clean the loo while I'm at it, and yes the sink, and the dust round the skirting board. Better put some washing in the machine too. 'What's for tea mum? I'm starving.' Pile of coats and bags in the hall, as daughter and friends arrive giggling about whether gorgeous Jack Scott really did follow them home from school. Now what was that essay topic? ”

BOX 2.1 WHY IS IT SO EASY TO BE DISTRACTED WHEN YOU ARE STUDYING?

The feeling of drifting in a sea of uncertainty makes you grasp at straws of distraction. When you don't understand the text and you're not really sure what you're trying to do, you feel restless and uneasy. Distractions provide relief. They offer the chance to focus on familiar and meaningful aspects of your life and escape from the uncertainties of studying. Routine, orderly tasks are particularly appealing. You reassure yourself that you can control your domestic world, even if your studies feel chaotic. The urge to avoid uncertainty is very strong. That is why it's important to set yourself specific tasks which help to give shape and meaning to your work.

Keeping up your concentration

To keep up your concentration, work out ways to keep actively engaged as you study. For example:

- When you read, use a highlighter pen to mark useful passages in the text. The choices you make about which words to highlight keep your mind in gear and so reading feels less passive. It is not just the writer