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Concentration

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If you have ever watched a child at play with a complex set of toys or tasks, you will relate to this picture. Here we see a young girl totally absorbed in the complexity of building a structure with Lego blocks. She is definitely not multitasking at the moment.

This ability is not universal, as there are some children with different abilities that may impact their ability to concentrate. For example, a child with ADHD might find it more difficult to focus for

long periods of time.

As adults, we rarely show this level of intensity. That's because we have other things that are allowed to distract our attention from the task at hand. If you would attempt to focus 100% of your attention on the task you are trying to perform the way a child does, you might just blow a fuse.

In his hilarious program "[Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage.](#)" Mark Gungor cites some studies indicating that women are more adept at multi-tasking, while men are generally single tasking beings.

Mark did not share his source, and the research may be suspect due to changes in the technology people use to communicate. He is quick to point out that he speaks in stereotypical generalities and that not all men prefer single tasks and not all women are good at multitasking.

My own observations are that in some circumstances I do well with multitasking while most of the time I like to work on one thing at a time. It has to do with individual preferences and also the specific tasks involved.

For example, if I am working on projects where there is time required to let the paint dry on one area before proceeding, I like to have several projects going simultaneously, so I can keep busy in what would be the slack times. Most of the time, like when writing or generating content, when I try to multi-task, I get confused and need to start all over, one thing at a time.

Does this make men better at concentrating than women? I think not. I think most women have the ability to handle different activities and concentrate on them all at once. Men may have the tendency to focus on one thing to the exclusion any distractions but it is individual and situation specific.

What is it about kids that they have the ability to be so excited about creating something that they can shut out all forms of distraction? What is the process whereby that ability became diluted with the maturing process, and how can we resurrect it for brief periods of time the way a child does?

I believe the answer is in the child's ability to imagine and be curious. The child sees the blocks (or crayons, or whatever the current vehicle is) as a form of reality in their minds. Certainly they are aware that the crayons are simply sticks of colored wax, but they take on the magic ability to actually create life in their hands. Adults have a hard time forgetting that the creative tools are just surrogates for reality. Kids have no concept of what surrogates are.

There are some adults who can emulate the child-like concentration, at least for some periods of time. I am thinking of my now-deceased father (who died at 101), who loved to paint pictures for the last half of his life. He would paint mostly on location, all over the globe. While he was actively creating the scene, he was almost oblivious to what was happening around him.

A bull could sneak up from behind him, and he would not notice. If it started to rain, someone would have to drag him inside. Over a period of 30 years, he painted roughly 2000 beautiful watercolor pictures that we are now blessed to enjoy and share with others.

I believe that many artists are so caught up in their creation that the scene becomes reality for them while doing the work. It is the same for programmers or writers who get caught up in the creative process.

So, my thesis is that highly creative people do have a greater ability to turn on and off their concentration and become more like children when they are doing what they love. Would you agree with this analysis?

This is a part in a series of articles on "Body Language." The entire series can be viewed on <https://www.leadergrow.com/articles/categories/35-body-language> or on this blog.