

# Are you an Artist that wants MORE MORE M.O.R.E.

by *Holly Gage*

Are you obsessed with your craft? Have moments where ideas come so fast through your head that eating, sleeping and keeping up your home is secondary? Ideas come whether you are still in your pajamas, naked in the shower, or in the middle of a restless sleep when you just need to waken and write down your thoughts or risk having them repeat in your mind over and over again until you execute them at 2:00 AM.

At the same time, you may have the tendency for several projects to be going at the same time and with every new idea you're off to start another. Maybe you finish those projects or maybe they sit on your workbench for months. How about your desk? Does it look like your brain with piles and scads of materials everywhere? How about your memory, do you have so much going on in there, you frequently forget to do things, you are late, or miss meetings? What about the direction of your jewelry business, have you been deliberate with your efforts or have you tried a number of creative approaches to succeed, but lack the focus to really jump start a true pattern of success?

Is this the creative process at work or is this something else? Is it time for M.O.R.E. (Mastering Overactive & Random Creative Energy) in your life? You may or may not know, but there are many similarities between creative people and those that have ADD.

Leonardo Da Vinci was a very creative and famous painter, yet among his great works he also left many unfinished. Sometimes referred to as the "Da Vinci Trait", some artists are easily distracted, finding it difficult to finish projects, and feel a need to change activities frequently. These same people like to explore new ideas and have a broad range of interests, however sometimes the excitement of a new project will make them lose interest in the one they have been working on leaving it incomplete.

Da Vinci was not the only one, other creative people such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Thomas Edison, or actor Orlando Bloom are known to have ADD. Creative students, just like ADD students, have been caught daydreaming in school. Although their teachers may have accused them of being inattentive, on the contrary, they were deep in thought with their own ideas, inventions, and what they consider to be more interesting.

Other difficulties arise during the school years when the creative student wants to solve problems in unique ways, but not necessarily through methods sought after by the curriculum or the teacher. Conformity is regarded much more than creative, imaginative thinking. Constantly being told, "You are doing it wrong" pays its toll squelching individual thinking and self-esteem. This might also explain, what people refer to as, an artists "temper-mental nature" and the defensiveness that often develops from being corrected and forced to think "in the box" instead of "outside of the box".

So now you might ask, are you suggesting all creative people have ADD? Well, not exactly. Firstly, not all people with ADD are creative, and not all creative people have ADD. However, the similarities are worth exploring further.

Many successful artist, C.E.O.s, and creative pioneers with this mixed bag of traits, actually credit their success to their diverse thinking, adaptive sensibility, adventurous nature and broad focused vision. The key is to understand your strengths and have methods in place that will help you to compensate in areas that may not be your strong point.

As artists, we have diverse options for the direction to take our businesses. We can create in many different styles or mediums and our choices of subjects are limitless. We sell at shows, galleries, craft fairs, online, and can chose to sell wholesale or retail. We teach locally or travel to wonderful destinations. With all these choices, focusing on just one of many great paths can be very difficult. Add to this the tendency of many creative artists to try each and every one of these choices and you can see why artists often complain about their struggle to keep their business focused and productive.

Having committed extensive research & study of ADD and the creative mind, I've developed a set of tools and techniques I call M.O.R.E (Mastering Overactive & Random Creative Energy). By adding the techniques of M.O.R.E to your artistic repertoire, I believe it is possible to help harness and focus your creative spirit, thereby becoming a more productive and successful artist.

What seems to be driving your attention in other directions? The computer? E-mail? The phone? Interruptions? Once you have identified these potential distractions take active steps to eliminate or at least minimize these challenges. Work in a separate room from the distractions, schedule computer time and keep to the schedule. Turn off the phone.

Take a hard look at your environment. Is it a mess? Do you spend more time looking for your tools then using them? Does the disorganization add work and create problems? Take time after each work session to clean up your work area. Designate spots for your files, hand tools and other frequently used items. This sweet little tip can actually save hours over the long run, not to mention frustration.

**What seems to be  
driving your attention  
in other directions?  
The computer?  
E-mail? The phone?  
Interruptions?**

As a jewelry artisan, you probably collect all types of information about jewelry techniques, books, articles, or magazines. Set up a shelf or file cabinet and then file or sort by category, such as finishing techniques, source files, project suggestions, you get the picture.

Another frequent complaint is time management. Can you tell the difference between 15 minutes or 45 minutes when you are in "work mode"? Are you constantly chasing the clock? If you have a lousy sense of time, you are not alone. An alarm clock on your watch, computer or cell phone may help. Set it so that you give yourself clean up time and space to get to the next activity. If you are chronologically challenged about how much time it takes to get from point A to point B, break down the steps. For example, you're meeting a client at 2:00 to show them a ring, you need to polish the ring: 40 minutes, package the ring: 3 minutes, write up the slip: 5 minutes, drive to clients house: 30 minutes, cushion for traffic: 10 minutes. Ask for help, others you work or live with can give you verbal reminders. (And trust me your time management skills are no secret to them.)

## Do you know your learning style?

Creative people often have great and fleeting ideas. They come at you during various times of the day...or night. Keeping all of the ideas and daily duties straight can be quite a job, so it is not uncommon for creative people to be forgetful. Arm yourself. Carry with you at all times a pad of paper and pencil, camera, small hand-held tape recorder, Blackberry or what ever devise you find helpful for recording your thoughts for later use. This technique also helps you to stay on track and not interrupt an activity you are already engaged in.

Do you know your learning style? Do you learn best Verbally, Visually, through Auditory or Kinesthetic cues? Fully understanding your learning modality can help you retain information, expand your toolbox of knowledge, and thus your ability to excel in your field.

Ask yourself, can you merely read an article and go to town on a project, or do you need to see a demonstration? Can you simply listen to a lecture or do you need to get your hands in there and try things on your own. Watch your frustration level go down as you pay more attention to these learning cues.

To really tackle the list of things to do, first brainstorm the list and then prioritize and organize. Decide which items need your immediate attention and put those items on the top. Next list those items with deadlines or limited time scheduled for completion. Put items that are less important or that can wait on the list last.

You may find that there are things that are not very important at all. At this point, you may decide to remove them from the list. Check off the activities one by one as you complete them, this will give you a sense of accomplishment. Don't be emotional about it, if it's on the list, as they say, "Just do it".

One thing to keep in mind as you make your list is how long it takes to do various tasks. It can be quite discouraging if you regularly put 10 things on your list when you

can only realistically accomplish 5. Don't beat yourself up; just adjust the list taking one day at a time. Every morning review your list of things to help you prepare, and every evening review what you did and how you may need to adjust the schedule for the next day. If there are still things that get shuffled from day to day and you are just not getting them done, it is time to take a deeper look into why not.

What happens to the tasks that you like least; soldering, putting a finish on the piece, marketing or keeping up the paperwork? Do such tasks go by the wayside? Let's consider strategies for getting things done you don't like to do.

1. Do the most undesirable tasks first and then reward yourself with a more desirable activity.
2. Consider cooperating or partnering with a fellow artist or business to do those things you would rather not do. Example: The billing, accounting or marketing.
3. Make a contract with yourself. For instance, allow yourself only 3 projects in the starting stage at the same time, but you cannot add any to your workbench until you finish the other three. This "contract with yourself" will keep the work-flow going and you'll accomplish more while keeping your production at a steady pace.

This article may be the first time that you have read a correlation between ADD and creativity. If you are finding that you are experiencing more than your fair share of challenges, then maybe you need to look further into the issue of ADD. The dividing line would be if you are experiencing problems that go beyond the challenging stage and actually are causing problems in the function of your daily life.

*Through Holly's travels and teaching experiences, she noticed many similarities when artists converse with each other. They often talk about the messy studio, many unfinished projects, and the interest in various artistic pursuits. Inevitably, the topic of focus or a tongue-in-cheek comment about their ADD tendencies would surface. Holly's interest in the topic lead her to a search that she hoped would help these creative minds hone in on their talents verse curse them.*



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