

My project is centered around the topic of thinking and thought processes. I researched the different ways people think and how it feels to think with ADHD. This topic has always been something I love discussing with my family and peers, so I decided to delve deeper.

This video is something that was very comfortable to make, for I felt entirely in my own head and was able to truly create the work I wanted to. The principle of getting lost in a thought is something I am very familiar with. The goal of my piece is to evoke a feeling/aura of satisfaction and hyper-focus on the images.

I wanted to create something that uses overwhelmingly pleasing audio and visual components, and provocative footage with powerful imagery to depict popular culture.

While the video, in general, is something that should be taken seriously, the content itself has no underlying meaning or message. The work is meant to evoke a feeling. I want the viewer to be consciously aware of how pleasing it is to watch something like this—to experience what it's like to be hyper focused on something they are watching. You are supposed to “lose yourself” in the video.

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Thinking About Thinking

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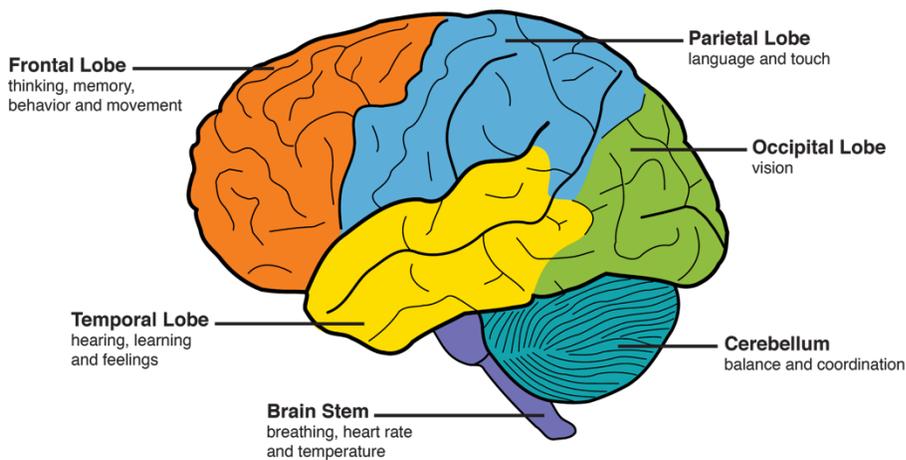
Running into my parents' bedroom, laughing as I crash into the door, I push through and jump onto the bouncy bed. I find my mom, lying on her side of the bed, with her computer in her lap. The look on her face when she sees me jump is one of good-humor, as she knows I am energized despite it being quite early in the morning. She tells me, "your test results are back." Anxious, I ask her what happened, and she told me I do, in fact, have ADHD. While most kids would be upset, I was ecstatic. I exclaimed, "Thank God I have ADHD, finally there's a reason why I can't sit still in class!" I said. "I'm so happy there's an actually *reason* why I can't do my work." Of course my mom laughed, and consoled me and told me that yes, there's an answer and there are things like medication that can help me be able to focus. I was so excited to finally begin functioning "right". I had this great idea in my head that once I take my medicine, I would think and act and feel like a normal kid. Already being 'different' because I was more mature than most of my peers, I felt unlike other kids. My journey through understanding my ADHD was interesting because of this, and having a psychiatrist as a mom is helpful. Having her to explain things along with therapists, I made my way. As I got older, I learned that so many other kids have what I have. The morning I found out, the only person I felt "connected with" through my disorder, was Adam Levine. My mom tried to tell me that Adam Levine and Michael Phelps both know what I'm going through because they have the same thing. The feeling was comforting but it wasn't until I found kids at school with ADHD, that I was able to not feel different because of my disorder.

I don't believe that stimulants for ADHD actually make you normal. I have tried over 6 stimulants or ADHD medications since I was diagnosed and am now an expert in the disorder. I regularly talk to my friends about what it's like to have ADHD and how it often gets miscategorized as something that is so common, that it barely matters. Many people think that ADHD is something that isn't challenging to live with, but this is in fact, not the case. Being medicated helps me immensely and I know I would not be as successful as I am without it, but it doesn't make everything 'go away'. When I am unmedicated-- a term used quite frequently in my family when I'm being particularly rambunctious-- it feels as though I am intoxicated. When I wake up in the morning, I automatically feel groggy and drunk and if I'm with friends, I get riled up very easily. It seems childish, but this is the only way I know how to describe it. For me, "unmedicated Phoebe" is a personality that my friends here at Oxbow are privy to because we live in such close quarters. Personally, I don't like being unmedicated throughout the day. I like having that productivity wave that comes when the medication kicks in and it helps me begin tasks that I need to do for the day. I do however, know many people with ADHD that don't like taking their medication. For many people, being on a stimulant can be incredibly dissociating and make people feel like they have no emotion. I began to feel this at a certain point around 7th grade. I felt like it was hard for me to interact with my friends because of how the medication made me feel. I was unsure of how to continue because, as a 7th grader, all I wanted to do was lead a normal life. I didn't want to continue switching my medications and making changes to my routine. This is something I had to become used to doing with almost every medication I take today. It is a part of my life and I am thankful that I have incredible resources to help me with my disorder. Understanding how the brain works, more specifically, how *my* brain works, is something that is important when you live with a disorder like ADHD.

Thinking is the process in which messages are sent from your brain, through neurons, to other regions of your brain. Our thoughts travel through our neurons and create a 'stream of thought.' Many parts of the brain work in tandem to integrate information and develop thoughts and ideas by bringing information together to be a coherent idea or concept. Thinking about

thinking is called metacognition and it's an important skill to have and be able to practice. Metacognition is how we are able to understand and reflect on our self-awareness skill and ability. It takes so much work within our brains to simply read a sentence, it's almost a miracle. There are several different parts of our brain that work together to take any initial stimulation, give it meaning, and then do something with it. For instance, you see your water bottle, think about how appealing the water looks, and then you drink the water. It was a three step process that happens so quickly that we normally, don't even realize it's happening. How do we actually know where in our brain thinking happens? fMRI scans or Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging scans can show us where blood flow is in our brain, when given certain tasks. Reading instructions would concentrate blood flow in one area and looking at an image would stimulate another. Doing a more complex task would involve more parts of your brain to work together. This is how we know that the several different parts of the brain work together to form thoughts. There are many different ways of thinking and not only does every person think differently, many people have disorders such as ADHD or executive functioning differences that change the way they think.

The frontal lobe is the largest part of our brain and it is about one-third of our brain. The prefrontal cortex is responsible for the thinking involved in our emotional well-being and our advanced interpersonal thinking¹. Both hemispheres of our prefrontal cortex are generally equally responsible for our social and interactive proficiency. The inferior frontal gyri are at the back of the frontal lobe on each side of the brain and they facilitate creative thinking. Creativity is dependent on thinking skills that use knowledge to generate innovative thinking. The interaction between the right and left sides of the brain is what stimulates this creative thinking.



The temporal lobe is involved in many reasoning skills, more specifically, reading. Located behind the frontal lobe on both sides of the brain, the temporal lobe is needed for hearing and word recognition. Visual recognition happens at the back of the brain in the occipital lobe. Mathematical and

analytical skills require interaction between the temporal lobe, prefrontal region and the parietal lobe, which is near the back of the brain at the top of the head. The skills needed for algebraic tasks and calculation skills are found in the left side of the parietal lobe, while geometric perception and 3-dimensional manipulation skills are part of the right side of the parietal lobe. The limbic system finds itself deep in the brain in the center, and consists of many small structures called the hippocampus, amygdala, thalamus and hypothalamus. The limbic system is responsible for emotional memory, mood control, and in general, our feelings.

Thinking is an undeniably complex process no matter how you view it. An interesting way Dr. Carlos Prieto looks at how the brain works, is as an orchestra. Imagining different parts of our brain involved in thinking as the different sections of the orchestra. Our prefrontal cortex is the part of our brain that acts as the conductor. The prefrontal cortex is the last to develop for kids

¹ Takiguchi, S. (n.d.). Human brain thinking process

with ADHD, so, someone might have very well-functioning, talented sections of their orchestra--meaning they are very intelligent--but without a functioning conductor, your orchestra isn't going to sound very good. For kids with ADHD, time is something that is thought of as 'now or not now.' This is why student will say 'I only work well under pressure' or 'I always start the night before, I can only focus if it's due the next day.' What this is, is self-medicating with the surge of adrenaline that comes with having a timed due date. Executive functioning problems are common when it comes to kids with ADHD. The 7 Executive functions are self-awareness, inhibition, non-verbal working memory, verbal working memory, emotional self-regulation, self-motivation, and planning and problem solving. Not everyone with executive functioning problems struggles with all of these.

I, personally, have most trouble with planning and self-motivation. Prieto said, "Let's say you get a history essay due in 2 weeks--some kids go home and begin right away and to kids like you, this seems magical. Kids with ADD or ADHD think of time as NOW or NOT NOW." This resonated with me and spoke to the many times in which I, in fact, did not start a long term project far in advance. Prieto reminded me that there are actually a significant amount of upsides to having ADHD. For one, due to the fact that going on tangents in thought are quite common for me, the ability to think expansively is something I am good at. Being able to think from a "sideways" perspective is a great advantage once I move out of the education system (which is considered very linear).

The thought processes of a brain with ADHD are quite different than a brain without. It is not just more challenging to stay on topic with my thoughts, but harder to organize those thoughts when I find myself receiving a great deal of information. While ADHD has its challenges, it's important not to lose sight of the fact that ability to be mentally efficient is different from actual intelligence. There are some kids that don't have the cognition that I have. Prieto said, "I know it's not nice to have any disorder, but in this case, I would much rather have it the way you do because you have the cognition and intelligence, some kids can't think how you do." I have found my groove with ADHD and I have figured out how to manage and take control of it. I am happy that I have an expansive mind and hope it serves me well in the future.

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