

# Study explores the cost of creativity

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Some people with laser focus may miss big-picture details, research suggests.

(HealthDay)—Intense focus can help creative people achieve success, but it may undermine their capacity for flexible thinking, new research suggests.

The Northwestern University study included 74 [college students](#) with extremely high or low scores on a [questionnaire](#) about their achievements in creative fields such as writing, music, cooking and science.

Each participant was given a series of 128 [challenges](#) in which they had one second to accurately identify either the details or the large picture. In these challenges, the students had to focus on the details before quickly shifting their attention to see the bigger picture, and vice versa.

After accounting for differences in intelligence and reaction speed, the researchers found that students with high levels of creative achievement made more mistakes (9 percent of the challenges) than less creative

students (2 percent).

The study was published April 25 in the journal *Frontiers in Psychology*.

Some experts have suggested that [creativity](#) partly depends on a person's ability to continuously switch attention between the details and bigger picture of a given task. But this study suggests that certain creatively successful people may focus so much on one aspect that they have difficulty switching to another.

**More information:** Zero To Three explains how [creativity helps children learn](#).

Citation: Zabelina DL and Beeman M (2013) Short-term attentional perseveration associated with real-life creative achievement. *Front. Psychol.* 4:191. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00191 , [www.frontiersin.org/Cognition/ ... 2013.00191/abstract](http://www.frontiersin.org/Cognition/...2013.00191/abstract)

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