

# The ADHD (SoMe) Actor: Dealing with inconsistency

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— An examination essay in Methods of Artistic Research

III

by

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INDEX	Page
1 Title page	1
2 Index	2
3 Hyperfixation and what that means for the ADHD (SoMe) actor	2
3.0 A quick forward	2
3.1 The interest based nervous system and acting technique	2-6
3. 2 Hyperfixation	6-10
4 Procrastination — a quick glance	11
Reference list	12-13

### 3 Hyperfixation and what that means for the ADHD (SoMe) Actor

#### 3.0 A quick forward

Dealing with ADHD and Acting and now knowing, for three years, that I have had to deal with it my entire life without knowing — I hope that some of these things I talk about in this essay can be the starting point of talking about some differences. Not on an individual level, but on a group level how hypothetically all ADHD-actors have to work harder with some things regarding the regularly taught acting techniques and maybe there are things here to discover further.

#### 3.1 The interest based nervous system and acting technique

One of the most frustrating things about having ADHD is knowing how important something is to get done and still not be able to motivate yourself to do it - this happens whether it is important to a boss or a parent or a partner but even if it is important to you [....]

(ADHDJessie 2022)<sup>1</sup>

This is something a lot of ADHDers online talk about (ADHDJessie 2022) (Mcabe 2020) and something I myself struggle with. This time I got the name of someone who has studied it: Willam Dodson (ADHDJessie 2022).

The 90 percent of non-ADHD people in the world are referred to as “neurotypical.” It is not that they are “normal” or better. Their

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/reel/CIRg7Ifv42z/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y=>

neurology is accepted and endorsed by the world. For people with a neurotypical nervous system, being interested in the task, or challenged, or finding the task novel or urgent is helpful, but it is not a prerequisite for doing it

(Dodson 2022)

W. Dodson describes what motivates a neurotypical person like this:

1. the concept of importance (they think they should get it done).
2. the concept of secondary importance — they are motivated by the fact that their parents, teacher, boss, or someone they respect thinks the task is important to tackle and to complete.
3. the concept of rewards for doing a task and consequences/punishments for not doing it.

(W. Dodson 2022)

What most acting teachers<sup>2</sup> and techniques have told me to do as an actor through out my life is this (in one way or another).

1. What is your specific objective? (the important thing to get done) (*Stanislavskij 1939*) (*Chubbuck 2005*) In the scene and/or connected to an overall objective (*Stanislavskij 1939; Chubbuck 2005*) that should be [but doesn't always need to be] aligned with the story being told "Be in line with the intentions of the playwright" (*Bruder, Cohn, Olnek, Pollack, Previto, Zigler 1986*).
2. Why do you need it from this specific place/person/co-actor/audience/etc? (importance to someone) (*Meisner 1987; Bruder et al. 1986*)
3. How do you know when you have succeeded? (What is the Reward/Punishment/Consequence for getting it right/failing): How do you win? (*Bruder et al. 1986; Chubbuck 2005*)
4. What actionable verb can you add to the need so that it becomes playable/doable (usually based on level of importance: ask for forgiveness, beg for forgiveness, demand your right for forgiveness and so on...) (*Stanislavskij 1939; Bruder et al. 1986*)
5. The action should be easy to do/understand how to do/accomplish (usually based on rewards or punishments like: "I need a hug from my lover to understand that \*\*\*\*<sup>3</sup> still love me" etc. (*Stanislavskij 1939; Bruder et al. 1986; Weston 1996*))
6. Put stuff in the way for dramaturgical purposes (*Adler 2000*) (usually already done in the text by authors, or by suggestions from directors). But also, usually, needs to be defined clearer by the actors or chosen by the actors to work with as more specific external or internal roadblocks to get enough friction between them/the thing/place/etc. and their scene objective.
7. Use an "As if" (*Stanislavski 1939*) to get grounded in the need, objective or reality of the role so you can perform your action in line with the character "Make it your own" (*Meisner 1987*) in other words understand on a personal level how important it is to get done, how things really appear on the fourth wall or how or what the 3D

<sup>2</sup> Be it the Stockholm Academy of Dramatic ART's Screen acting or Mime Acting program, The Royale Theatre DRAMATEN's course in meeting the big stage, Stockholm University of the Arts acting master, courses on Teateralliansen, workshops and acting classes throughout my entire life at different levels of Academia or outside of it...

<sup>3</sup> I mark she/him/they/etc as \*\*\*\* in acting suggestions to be more inclusive and make the reader be able to easier put themselves in the sentence.

animated Goblin looks like, what level of relationship you have with the acting partner be it a rock or spouse, etc... or use an “As if” to substitute a character, word or other to ground your action with reality and your emotions (*Hagen 1973; Meisner 1987; Weston 1996; Chubbuck 2005*)

8. Why now? Why can't it happen in 2 minutes or the next day? Make it urgent! (*Meisner 1987; Bruder et al. 1986*)
9. Play with it/ make it interesting and fun. (*Bruder et al. 1986*)
10. Where did you just come from/what are you doing in the start of the scene (actually a really important one but is actually just 1-9 for a playable action to carry you into the scene (*Adler 2000*)/get interrupted from by the new and even more time sensitive task by the setting/co-actor/circumstances/etc in the actual played scene (*Meisner 1987; Chubbuck 2005; Bruder 1986*) — As in not to go onto stage/ in front of the camera doing nothing and being “private”). But, this is also a common actor trap (making this too interesting or showing too much of your baggage... Sometimes the audience already know the character and the setting and they only need the actor to play something mundane to tell the right story, as with in the apple cake scene in the film *The Inglorious bastards (2009)* where Christopher Walz<sup>4</sup> by rumour only plays: “I need my guest to try this really good apple strudel”<sup>5</sup>.

Now out of these nine, from the top of my head, only three is speaking directly to the ADHD nervous system, the “interest based nervous system” (*Dodson 2022*)

Anyone with ADHD will answer along these lines: “I have always been able to do anything I wanted so long as I could get engaged through interest, challenge, novelty, urgency, or passion.”

(*Dodson 2022 II*)

This five traits of his, may hypothetically explain why an ADHD actor haven't always been able to perform directly through the regular acting advice, but being forced to find other ways or work with the 3.5 advice that actually always gets them up on the floor, namely:

**“6. Put stuff in the way.”:** This, when it is done the right way pushes the “easy to perform task” to, a still easy to understand task and probably easy to perform but, become a challenge! Maybe it's a too easy win “getting a hug” and it gets boring playing it several times in a row, so adding some extra challenge like “I need \*\*\*\* to take the initiative to give me a hug” or “I need \*\*\*\* to realise \*\*\*\* love\* me”. It's harder to get than “a forgiving hug”, but a greater challenge doesn't just add ADHD-motivation it also adds drama (and that is usually a good thing in the ART of acting).

**“8. Why now?”:** This is the one that adds a deadline, urgency, and time pressure. And this the ADHD brain understands to be motivated by (*Dodson 2022*) - the closer to a dead-

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<sup>4</sup> The Actor playing the Villain in the movie.

<sup>5</sup> I've looked every where for this quote but haven't found it so this has to stand as a metaphor until I can find it or he never actually did that - but he very well could have and that is the art of story telling, right - it doesn't have to be true it just have to sound more true than... I heard this story first from an acting student, one class above me — and it stuck with me as a great example to not carry your past with you onto every scene...

line the more motivation<sup>6</sup>. So hypothetically the ADHD actor need to be really specific why this scene has to play out just now: and the more time pressure they can get in to it, the better actor they can be on the floor (as long as it doesn't interfere with the overall storytelling, of course).

**“9. Play with it, make it interesting and fun”:** This is the one that can add interest and connect to your passions usually in combination with a really good “as if” (*Stanislavskij 1939*).

Because, hypothetically, if the importance of the objective and the “need from” isn't inline with the ADHD actor's passions and interests that will lead to a failure of motivation to get up on the floor and work and also leads to being scatter focused during the acting session because the brain will be constantly searching for something more fun, interesting, passionate, time sensitive or challenging to motivate it to go on. Or as Professor Brosowski<sup>7</sup> would put it: “You have to [commit to the played action or movement and] feel an unstoppable desire<sup>8</sup> to move”.

And now for the really bad news: There is one more thing that D. Dodson (2022) mentions that motivates our interest based nervous system and that is novelty.

Novelty: Novelty I hypothesise is the thing that really gets you as a neurodiverse actor, it jumps up and stabs you in the back when you least expects it.

Say, you have everything under control; it's fun on the floor; it's based on your interest or passion; and everything else is in place, and suddenly — it's all gone. The nerve, the excitement, the feelings — Everything. Well, “Everything” is actually still there, in place, and you might still enjoy playing it, but the brain isn't with you all the way. And this is usually because the brain has decided that this is **old news** and that it already has played this out and it's looking for new horizons. Not so fun if there is 150 more shows to be done or 10 more takes that day...

But, just knowing that the ADHD brain craves much more novelty (Dodson 2022) to stay interested, passionate and motivated I hypothesise is a huge comfort, it allows the ADHD-actor to prepare for this in advance with a couple of extra things to play or do on stage to spice everything up again. This of course happens to all actors but my hypothesis is that it should happen much more often to ADHD-actors and to a degree that actually not just frustrates them but also makes them think they are doing things wrong or worse than their peers (whom in comparison can stay much longer with the same playable actions or reuse them over and over again getting the same engaging result from their brains).

Research suggestion:

- 1) Ask ADHD-actors (in an online, easy to read and easy to get numerical data from, survey)
- 2) Put different sort of neurotype actors up to the same task and see how novelty, interest, urgency, fun, passion and challenge places a part in their work.

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<sup>6</sup> Wich is also an ADHD trap in real life because all things can't be done in the last 3 days or 3 hours or 3 minutes... But, as a scene objective — this is gold!

<sup>7</sup> Stanislaw Brosowski, Professor in Mime Acting at Stockholm University of the ARTs, during classes 2010-2013

<sup>8</sup> Swedish: “oemotståndlig lust” could be read as passion, desire, lust, need, etc...

- 3) Other: personal long qualitative hour interviews about anything ADHD acting related with a lot of actors and pluck out the things that actually pop up - and not the things I speculate on.
- 4) Play with myself as a lab rat
- 5) other

Short problem shoot:

- 1) How to make it safe and reliable, and get ADHD actors to want to do the survey and not just get neurotypicals?
- 2) How would I know which ones have ADHD, since I hypothesise, and manny with me, that neurodiversity is overrepresented within the arts? (Gawrilow, Goudarzi 2019; Turner 2022)
- 3) This is too time consuming for a master's degree and I also want to be up on the floor as a researching artist and not just listening and writing.
- 4) I know what I'm researching and could read the results that I think I want and not the ones that I really get
- 5) Put time and money into researching other ways to get the answers I want.

### 3.2 Hyperfixation

The difference of hyperfixation and hyperfocus seems to be a little bit vague in academia and as far as I have looked it is commonly used interchangeably, and meaning the same thing.

Here are two quotes from persons talking about hyperfixation from the ADDitude magazine's survey about it.

1. [...]and the silence during those activities was golden to me. I'd lose 3 hours and wonder where in the world time had flown to. Often the jolt back to reality is/was rather depressing because, during these activities, my inner critic is silenced [...]

(Canada 2022)

2. "I am an artist. I work in several mediums, but currently I take pottery classes. [...] I can't stop it. My classmates will crank out several pieces in a day and I will work on one for weeks."

(US 2022)

And in this post Rick Green talks about his hyperfixation and hyperfocus: <https://totallyadd.com/hyperfixation-and-adhd/> (Green 2022)

My own definition reads as follows (since I haven't yet found one that encompasses what I myself and what several persons in the ADHD community experience)<sup>9</sup>

**Hyperfocus:** A very strong focus that can be hard to pull away from, even if you want, that happens when one or all of the right conditions of the interest based nervous system are strongly met. (As in quote 1)

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<sup>9</sup> Easily googled with "ADHD Hyperfixation" and you get tons of different viewpoints about it.

**Hyperfixation**<sup>10</sup>: A very strong focus that can be hard to pull away from, even if you want, for a longer period of time (where 'a longer period of time' is at least holding longer than over one sleep cycle i.e. you can rest and wake up and still feel the pull of it) and it is mainly based out of a strong passion and interest. (As in quote 2)

Meaning you pulling 3 all nighters to finish your essay is not really a clear hyperfixation because that is mainly urgency. And you doing the push up challenge for 30 days<sup>11</sup> (and then never doing a push up again<sup>12</sup>) isn't either a hyperfixation because it is mainly based on the challenge etc.)

So, what is a hyperfixation:

If we take me as an example I have a strong interest and a longer passion for anything superheroes, sci-fi, fantasy, acting, stunts, stage fight etc. And my hyperfixations usually happens around these things.

This year it has been

- 1) From a previous hyperfixation to read all the Star Wars canon books, I started collecting Pokémon<sup>13</sup> cards and buy all of the right things, research everything on the internet and got deeply involved
- 2) I saw that there was Star Wars (1977) cards that could be collected and started researching all of those instead, collecting and being in the loop of everything
- 3) This autumn I jumped off the pokémon train to start watching all episodes of My Hero Academia (2016) .
- 4) And now the last one, a couple of weeks ago, I stumbled over a NFT<sup>14</sup>-project Broadsiders<sup>15</sup> (BrOads1de 2022) that made me go all in and I have had a hard time sleeping and focusing on anything else than crypto-ART. And NFT-storytelling.

Usually I can comeback to a hyperfixation but they can also just be for a couple of days until the strong interest is gone. Those are usually more based on novelty than a strong interest or passion and might be longer sessions of Hyperfocus but since it covers several days I still define that as a kind of hyperfixation.

But if you take Broadsiders (BrOads1de 2022) they pick off:

- 1) novelty: It's completely new to me (and therefore also ART (Lindman 2022) for me)
- 2) interest: It's based in my interest of Sci-fi, superheroes and is very smart, interesting, provoking and requires my full attention to get a hold of.
- 3) challenge: It's clues and riddles and a collection sport
- 4) urgency: The story and everything is happening IRL right now and will be over after this, can't be told the same way ever again, with these NFTs.
- 5) Passion: Since it ticks of my longterm interests/passions and connects with me I get passionate about it.

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<sup>10</sup> Not to be confused with "special interest" that is clearly defined within the Autism community

<sup>11</sup> Yes I did that publicly on facebook...

<sup>12</sup> joke, but a little true.

<sup>13</sup> Collectable card game turned into big franchise... <https://pokemon.com>

<sup>14</sup> NFT = None fungible token [often a piece of art or other desirable token that is locked to one person on the internet]

<sup>15</sup> NFT collection - that tells the story of 7290 broadsides and uses the NFTs to tell the story and drop NFTs to the holders of those NFTs held and uses the Discord community to help them tell and role-play the story with the holders of the NFTs.

All of these ticks of my interest based nervous system to such a degree that I forget to eat, take care of myself and can't focus on much other things...

So, what does this mean to my ADHD SoMe Acting master's degree? If I can't pull away from it?

I asked myself this question. And for the first time in my life I also thought... What if I don't try to stop it, what if I use it?

It's such a neurotypical way of thinking that when something that strongly takes your focus away from something important you have to lay that to the side and wait it's turn.

The best example I've heard that kind of proves my point is in creative writing classes or books on creativity: When the teacher/writer usually says focus on one thing (Keller 2014), if you get ideas write a short note and put them to the side, for later use, and go back to what you are doing — write the book you are writing now first!

And then you have writers like N.N<sup>16</sup>. that just wrote on stories and if one stopped holding their thought for a while or they got another idea they jumped on that and started writing on another typewriter. Working on several at the same time and continuing on each when the desire to write is there. Maybe this is a more neurodiverse way of doing things? Following your focus instead of trying to control it, since the whole thing with ADHD is that you have a hard time regulating your focus (and well, most things actually) (Christiansen, Hirsch, Albrecht, *et al.* 2019; Barkley 2022; Barkley II 2022)

So, I started asking myself questions like:

- 1) How can I use this new hyperfixation in my art and ARTistic research?
- 2) Is there a way to be a ADHD SoMe Actor on a decentralised economic space like the OpenSea<sup>17</sup>?
- 3) How could I create and be a part of this future of story telling?
- 4) What does it mean to be an ADHD SoME Actor in this space?

And it has been very fun, creative and very distracting, indeed.

I've looked at other projects as well but none is as compelling as Broadsiders (*Br0ads1de* 2022), where you can own FRC<sup>18</sup> to your NFT and continue telling your own stories with it after and during the events of the collection as a whole. It's a little bit like someone giving away the rights to "Emil" in "Emil i Lönneberga" (*Lindgren* 2021) to do as they please with them. Print their own T-shirt collections coming up with video games and writing their own books because Astrid Lindgren (*Lindgren* 2021) only owns the rights to the book itself and not the characters in it. Amazing! Provoking! And O so wonderfully enchanting to my brain.

What I've done is create a space where I can tell my Broadsider's (*Br0ads1de* 2022) story and also create collections and NFTs myself as a ADHD SoMe Actor. (Acromee & Pisces 2022)

I've so far managed to:

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<sup>16</sup> This is also a story I've heard told many times but I can't find the famous author that wrote like this, anywhere, so this might also just be a metaphor for now for another neurodiverse way of working...

<sup>17</sup> Common NFT market place: <https://opensea.io>

<sup>18</sup> Free commercial rights



- 1) Make 5 NFTs<sup>19</sup> that grants the holder of the NFT the right to entitle themselves Executive producer to my short film *The Gunslinger* (2021) on IMDB<sup>20</sup>.
- 2) Make a ADHD SoMe Actor AI painting<sup>21</sup> collaboration with the DallEE (DallEE 2022) service online
- 3) Share an AI inspired dream<sup>22</sup> of my fictional character and FRC owned Broadsider NFT (*Broadsider* 2022) with the Broadside community on Discord (2022) as my fictional character in a NFT verified Role-play chat.

I've have several future ideas how to interact with the space on a larger scale and I am super glad that I followed my whim and allowed myself to be hyperfixated and learn and incorporate it into my research. Not just to explore new horizons for the actor as a free decentralised artist that can upheave the normal hierarchal ways of being a creator at the lower ends of the economy (A Lindman 2022), but also a way to see what happens and understand ADHD hyperfixation.

Things that I can do to further investigate:

- 1) Conduct a survey online asking about how actors do with sudden bursts of inspiration, preferably one controlled through "Scen & Film"'s newsletter and one open free to anyone to fill in.
- 2) Holding Co-labs or/and asking people online to do research tasks for me via TikTok, OpenSea, Discord, instagram, Patreon, Youtube etc<sup>23</sup>...
- 3) Research trough my own hyperfixations and letting them become part of my creative processes instead of being hinders that pull me away from my research.
- 4) Doing Labs where I use the actors in them to do exercises that are bound to their current hyperfixations

Fast problem shoot:

- 1) Hard to know or what people answer and if they answer truthfully, but maybe the larger data can help confirm patterns?
- 2) Co-Labs take time to plan and organise and are prone to fall in-between my other projects, Online research tasks for people on Social media sounds intriguing and needs some easy way to manage the research results... Surveys, TikTok account videos?
- 3) Research through my own hyperfixation can take time because I don't always have one...

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<sup>19</sup> <https://opensea.io/assets/ethereum/0x495f947276749ce646f68ac8c248420045cb7b5e/50543894558572483053736110132536680589721838843132882128961001132360604844037/>

<sup>20</sup> Internet movie data base: <https://imdb.com>

<sup>21</sup> <https://opensea.io/assets/ethereum/0x495f947276749ce646f68ac8c248420045cb7b5e/50543894558572483053736110132536680589721838843132882128961001133460116471908/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://opensea.io/assets/ethereum/0x495f947276749ce646f68ac8c248420045cb7b5e/50543894558572483053736110132536680589721838843132882128961001137858162983595/>

<sup>23</sup> Different internet platforms

- 4) Maybe this can be done online? Like having several acting “students” test my hypotheses, and record the sessions for future knowledge??<sup>24</sup>

Future possible uses for me with the NFT and web3<sup>25</sup> spaces:

- 1) creating short 5 sec videos that can be owned by the holder of it as an NFT, printed for a limited amount of 1-10000 mints<sup>26</sup> (opensea 2022).
- 2) Create collections of 5 second NFT-videos that can be used to put together the holders own stories with FCR or CCO or other rights...
- 3) Create original works to be owned by others or to be owned by others with adding special rights like Crowd funding<sup>27</sup>, instead of crowdfunding a project you put out a NFT-collection that grants the holders different executive producer rights and special permissions to use the material or grant the holders special benefits like tickets to shows, merchandise or the right to make their own videos or merchandise from the product.
- 4) Telling stories as an actor and using the community that buys the NFTs to help me further the story or create their own stories with in the set universe — give the holders right to change or comment on the story or be a part of the story through discord chats<sup>28</sup> or other social media like Tiktok<sup>29</sup> or create a fan wikipage or fandom page for co-creators to fully expand the story universe<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> THIS! I have to do THIS!

<sup>25</sup> Decentralized web, internet 3.0, based on machine readability and tokonomics and blockchain... <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web3>

<sup>26</sup> Minting is what it is called when a user pays to make an NFT appear on the blockchain for the first time from a store or collection: like with coins, meaning “to produce for the first time”.

<sup>27</sup> Asking for funds to a project usually before it has started from a larger crowd instead of institutions, governments, funds or companies. The crowd can be fans or anonymous on a large scale crowdfunding site on the internet.

<sup>28</sup> Common group chat that also can function as a controlled community for creators to manage their communication with their byers/fans/players/etc. <https://discord.com>

<sup>29</sup> Social media platform <https://tiktok.com>

<sup>30</sup> Fandom idea mentioned in a broadside-holder chat were everyone could continue telling their part of the stories in an expanded universe.

## 5 Procrastination — a quick glance

Dealing with hyperfixations and hyperfocus as an ADHD SoMe actor I hypothesise comes with a lot of procrastination, especially if you can't contain the hyperfixation to your current project as I wrote earlier (*Lindman 2022*), it should create a lot of ARTy spur of the moments that if you let them can actually generate stuff that can be of use. Like this youtube video of mine (*Lindman 2022*) I couldn't write on my paper because the youngest of my children was taking a nap with my wife and the older one was playing so I couldn't really do anything because my brain didn't let me be focused enough to write in the same room as my oldest child - but I had a growing idea from a thought I had about the incident in Poland and the Russian war in Ukraine that just wouldn't shut up in my mind either so I took my phone and went just outside the door (so i still could see and hear if my oldest one were up to no good) and recorded the idea that could hold my focus... And, maybe posted it a little to fast, impulsively, to my social media channels... But, what I think is important from this little story is that the ADHD urge to follow the current hyper fixations, interests, passions, novelty, deadlines or just fun stuff is part of the ADHD actors toolbox as an ARTist, because ADHD actors have an interest based nervous system (*D. Dodson 2022*) and that means you sometimes need to follow those impulses and other times (as with cooking food and paying the bills or any other mundane thing your brain can't motivate you to do in time) you need to create or align these things with external ADHD motivator mechanisms in the same way you have to put them externally on top of regular neurotypical acting advice.

Make it funnier, more interesting, challenging, align it with your passions, make it more urgent and make sure that you have a couple of different methods in your sleeves when the novelty of the first, second and third wears off...

More on procrastination later, now lets make the editing and source checking of this document really fun and interesting...<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> But, HOW! Please, somebody tell me! This part is excruciating!!!

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