

I Get It  
Transcription

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Hi, this is Gary Rogowski. Welcome to Splinters. Let me just say briefly, please check out our website, [Northwestwoodworking.com](http://Northwestwoodworking.com) for information on the Online Mastery Program and Setting Up Shop series that we're offering this fall. Please check out [Highland Woodworking.com](http://HighlandWoodworking.com), our partner in education, important stuff these days.

Teaching people how to work with their hands is still I think it's really important. All right, I'm going off on a tangent. I have something else to talk about. I think that everyone who goes to school should do manual arts, there's the term, manual arts training. I think it's essential. I think it's essential in our brain development and our emotional development because you're going to make mistakes. You're going to have to fix mistakes. There's a lot of thinking and reasoning and stuff that goes on when you work with your hands. There's so much learning that goes on. I know I came from an academic background. I started woodworking. I was not unchallenged by it. Not physically, mentally. I was like, what do I do here? I had no clue. So that, I think, really helps people, no matter where they end up, the operating room or the boardroom or the card room. Maybe it doesn't help the card players that much.

Anyway, our topic today is called, I Get It. I get it. We are in a curious spot these days. I am, certainly. I think we all are. These times, this time is so uncharted. No one knows which way is up. Are we on the verge of a revolution, or will we calm down as a people finally and start acting in quotations, "normal" again? And were we normal before COVID? This COVID effect makes us feel even more strange, I think. And the internet surge in all of our lives, is it something we can recover from, manage, or do we just go numb under its constant effects? And you know what I'm talking about. Our phones, personal computers, digital toasters, and smart washing machines. Oh, boy, those things. What happened to technologies that we could put in neat little boxes?

Here's the phone technology and the computer technology. And here's the durable goods technology. Why should they all meet? *Cui bono*, who benefits? I know, I know, old man. Keep up with the times. Sometimes the times just don't make any sense to me. They just don't make any sense. A recent read of mine was "Deep Work," a book by Calvin Newport. And the book made me think about all the technology I shove in my face during the day. The issue he brings up is not how to escape the world of technology, but how to mediate its effects on our brains, our focus, our happiness. How can we make personal time for ourselves that let us go deeply into what matters the most for us. Now, for him, it seemed to be academic papers and getting tenure, and it's very career track, academic research. But carving wood or learning to play Bach's English Suites, this can be important stuff to take up our time with.

Our immersion, our concentration, our determination then can offer us this sense of flow that I've spoken about before. This is where we do the work for its own sake, focus just on the work, and strive to get better with each attempt. Time disappears. We enter into a zone that is not like our digital world, where our attention flits from one message to another. When you're in the zone, we are almost unconscious in our ability to perform at a high level. You're aware of it, of course. But it's an amazing feeling.

Now, a famous Yogi once said, "You can't think and hit at the same time."

And that's mostly true. But there's a lot of thinking that goes into getting ready to swing the bat. The flow state that I talk about is exactly what I think the Mastery Program is after. To give folks a framework within which to learn and grow, to learn how to design, and make some cool furniture. And there's a lot of work and practice that goes into this. The repetition is what makes a difference. And the results can transcend simply being competent. They can take us one day into a space where we can offer our whole being into this effort. So even though my phone and my several computers suck up my time, shatter my focus, and make me as jittery as a doppio espresso some days, I still have to figure out how to live with this technology in a way that keeps me whole.

And for me, that is always the bench. At my bench, until my new shop gets finished, I do offer online classes. I understand the irony there. And they're not the same as in-person classes. But in some areas, it has proven to be more effective in considering topics that in person made a lot of students uncomfortable. And that is the D word: Design, Drawing. I'll say it, Dreaming.

In person, it's hard for guys in particular to let their guard down. Just be silly, just to play around with an idea. It's easier to do it in the comfort of your own shop. No one else is around. No one's watching, except your inner critic. That's the challenge. Oh, I came across a great quote. Let me see if I can find it. Oh, I found it. Here it is. This was sent to me by Bill Elliott.

Thanks, Bill. Bill was in touch with me about the Mastery Program, the Online Mastery Program. And the last quote he included was in an interview of an old traditional Japanese carpenter that he saw on YouTube, who was asked the question, "How do you define craftsmanship?" In his reply, "Overcoming yourself, making your own way and pulling through." We are the problem at the bench and learning how to face our own challenges, our self-imposed challenges, is so important.

Well, let me get back to my topic. I'm working now on a commission for a jewelry cabinet. It's been taking a while. It's stalled a little bit. And I have to design, not just a cabinet, but I got to design holders and pins, and the client just said, "Go for it, whatever. Do what you need to do." So I started to think about some ideas, and something came to me that I've been playing around with for years, and that's to work with hammered metal. And my idea was to hammer a kind of shallow bowl. And I'd done one once in aluminum, but it's not that great of metal to play with. Not the sexiest material around. And I found some copper sheet, but that seemed too thin.

And I had taken a pewter class some years ago, and I found a small sheet of pewter saved in a box. Pewter is super soft, burns very easily when soldering, very malleable. But when you hammer it, you not only get this great texture, but the metal hardens. Hmm.

So I grabbed my hammer and my little jewelry saw, and for the next hour, I couldn't stop making pewter leaves and pewter shapes and pewter bowls for the jewelry to rest in inside this cabinet. And it was so much fun. I didn't care about time or if this would work. It was just, I had discovered something, rediscovered something. And I was just making these shapes, and I was just riffing. I'll figure out what to do with them later. I was just having fun. And that flow state for me where the ideas start to come so fast, it's just like opening a door, and it opens up new possibilities.

So I get it. We are in an uncomfortable time right now. I say do something for yourself that will help you make sense of the world and help you focus. It will be work. It's good work. For information about the Mastery Program, the Online Mastery Program. There's a couple spots left. I'd sure love to fill them. Please go to our website, [northwestwoodworking.com](http://northwestwoodworking.com). There's an online mastery page you can check out.

And please check out Highland Woodworking's website. It's a great store in Atlanta, Georgia. It's basically an old style hardware store only it's just woodworking stuff. It's really a great, great place to go to. So check them out. And take care of yourselves. Start there and work out. Work out from there. All right, I'm through Blathering. Check out our website. Check out our classes and do good work. Adios.