

Increasing Flow Experiences

In psychological terms, “flow” is a mental state in which a person is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus while performing a challenging activity. People more commonly call this “being in the zone.” Many psychologists feel that when people have frequent experiences of “flow,” preferably several times a day, they experience more positive emotions, as well as a sense of well-being and purpose.

Flow is a feeling in which even difficult tasks become easy. You lose track of time because you are so involved in the activity. Runners often talk about a “runner’s high,” when running even long distances becomes almost effortless. Some people experience flow while doing a hobby, like gardening or restoring their car. Some people are lucky enough to experience flow doing their work.

Sonja Lyubomirsky, in her book *The How of Happiness*, writes, “The experience of flow leads us to be involved in life (rather than be alienated from it), to enjoy activities (rather than to find them dreary), to have a sense of control (rather than helplessness), and to feel a strong sense of self (rather than unworthiness). All these factors imbue life with meaning and lend it a richness and intensity. And happiness.”

You will know you are experiencing a flow activity when:

1. You’re completely involved in what you’re doing; you’re completely focused on what you’re doing.
2. There’s a sense of great pleasure as you perform a flow task; you feel outside of everyday reality.
3. There’s a sense of inner clarity; you know what needs to be done and you get immediate feedback on how well you’re doing.
4. You know that the activity is doable, even though it may be difficult; you’re confident that you have the necessary skills to complete the task successfully.
5. You lose your sense of self, and your worries and concerns drift away.
6. You lose track of time, and you’re completely focused on the present moment.
7. There’s an intrinsic motivation; whatever you’re doing to produce flow becomes its own reward.

The feelings of flow are a “natural high” and, in fact, your brain does produce chemicals that make you feel “high,” including endorphins and endocannabinoids, which are a naturally synthesized version of THC. This is the chemical responsible for the buzz that marijuana produces.

This worksheet will examine how you can have more periods of flow in your life.

Use this sheet to think about the activities that create flow. Then, use the chart on the next page to record your success at creating flow activities each day.

List hobbies that you feel produce a sense of flow.

List challenging activities that produce flow, such as crossword puzzles, Scrabble, and so on.

List exercise or other physical activities that produce flow.

List cleaning and organizing activities that produce flow.

List other activities that produce flow.
