

Flow

The Science of Happiness: Theory and Practice

Flow



The Flow Experience

“Flow is about...being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you're using your skills to the utmost.”

~ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi ~



Flow and Maslow's Pyramid

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



- Csikszentmihalyi discovered “flow” through interviews with creative people such as musicians and scientists.
- During these interviews many reported having “peak experiences”
- These experiences were first described by Maslow as part of self-actualization
- How can we have peak experiences? Csikszentmihalyi was very interested in this question.

The Discovery of Flow



- Csikszentmihalyi and Larson used the “experience sampling method” to find out what really made people happy.
- Experience sampling was a significant step towards a genuine science of happiness
- 75 Students were beeped at random moments and asked what they were doing, and how they felt
- Csikszentmihalyi discovered that, aside from meeting with friends, students were most happy during “flow activities,” such as sports and creative pastimes

What is Flow?



Preconditions of flow:

- Doing something that we like doing
- Goals should be clear and attainable
- Our skills should match the challenges
- Concentration is key

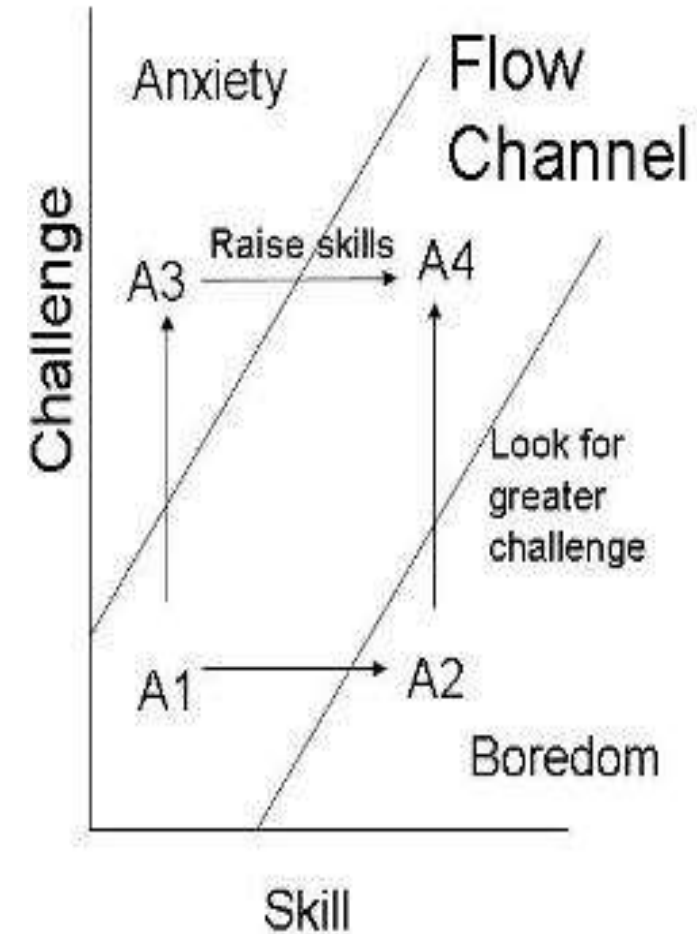
Qualities of flow:

- Loss of self-consciousness and awareness of time
- Sense of personal control
- Activity is intrinsically rewarding
- Effortlessness of action
- Absorption in the activity

How to Stay in the Flow Channel



- **Boredom:** Skills are too advanced and the challenge too easy
- **Anxiety:** Skills too elementary and challenge too difficult
- **Flow:** Skills are matched to the challenges
- To continue experiencing flow, gradually raise the challenges and polish the skills needed to match



Flow: Key Points



- **Flow is about being in the zone**
 - Find something creative that you like doing
 - Set clear goals
 - Stay in the flow channel
 - Slowly raise the bar
 - Skills should match challenges
- **Benefits of Flow**
 - Impact on positive thinking / mood
 - Enhanced performance
 - Enhanced self-confidence through commitment to meaningful goals

Key Scientific Studies on Flow

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