

Module 5: Flow



Subject: Psychological Well-being

Duration of Unit: 2 classes (45 min each)

Central Message: If we are deeply involved in trying to reach a goal, or an activity that is challenging but well suited to our skills, we experience a joyful state called “Flow.”



LEARNING GOALS

Enduring Understandings:

- The experience of Flow leads to increased positive emotion, improved performance, and commitment to long-term, meaningful goals.
- In order for a Flow state to occur, it must be voluntary, enjoyable, require skill and be challenging, with clear markers towards success.

Essential Questions:

- Why is Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi regarded as a pioneer of the science of happiness?
- What are the preconditions of Flow?
- What are the qualities of a Flow experience?

Learning Outcomes:

Students will be able to:

- Describe the preconditions of Flow.
- Identify personal experiences of Flow, especially favorite pastimes that generate Flow (i.e., playing instruments or sports).

- Articulate why those activities foster greater happiness.
- Identify the remarkable parallels between Csikszentmihalyi's and Zhuangzi's description of Flow.

LESSON PLAN

Day 1 Main Topic – The Discovery of Flow

- **Challenge Assignment Debrief:** Break students into pairs. Give each member of the pair five minutes to talk about which goal they picked to improve their physical wellbeing over the semester, and what kind of challenges they may have to deal with to succeed. (10 mins)
- **Watch the video on Flow** (10 mins)
- **Video Debrief:** Facilitate a discussion about the video using the following prompts: “What was the most memorable clip, and why?” (5 mins)
- **Lecture:** Use the slide deck to refresh students' memory about Csikszentmihalyi's groundbreaking study on Flow. Ask for volunteers to list the main preconditions of Flow. (10 mins)
- **Group activity:** Break into groups of five and ask students to describe their favorite Flow activities. (10 mins)
- **Assignment:**
 - Have students read the following two website links and write notes on the following questions:
<http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/science-of-happiness/getting-in-the-Flow/>
 - Note: Mention that this is an outline of the science of Flow.

<http://www.bopsecrets.org/gateway/passages/chuang-tzu.htm>

Note: Mention that this webpage provides six alternative translations of the story of **Butcher Ding** by Zhuangzi, a pioneer of the philosophy of happiness. Watson's translation is probably the most accurate. This story is very unusual because Ding discovers joy through one of the most despised professions of ancient China.

- Describe at least three ways in which Ding's description of his skill reflect the experience of Flow.
- How does Ding find happiness through such a menial job?
- What does Ding's employer mean by saying "I have heard the words of Ding and learned how to care for life!"

Day 2 Main Topic – Why does Flow make us happier?

- **Assignment Debrief:** Write the questions for the previous assignment on the board and have students volunteer responses. (10 mins)
- **Group activity:** Split the class into groups of three, one student representing Wen-Hui, one representing Ding, and one representing the ox. Ask the groups to write a script for a five-minute sketch (an easy-to-follow outline of the Ding story), and rehearse it. (20 mins)
- **Enactment:** Go round the class, pick the most engaging script (or ask for one group to volunteer), and ask the authors to enact it in front of the rest of the class. (10 minutes)
- **Assignment Intro:** Keeping in mind the conditions of Flow, pick a favorite Flow activity and practice it for at least thirty minutes. In a journal, write down your feelings and thoughts before, during and after the activity. Then, answer the following questions:
 - Were you able to achieve a state of Flow? If so, how did you know?
 - If not, what do you think got in the way of you being able to achieve Flow?
 - How did you feel before, during, and after the Flow activity?

Then, have students write in their journal about a Flow activity they will commit to engaging in regularly over the course of the semester. (5 mins)

ASSESSMENT

Summative Assessment:

- Students submit their **Weekly Happiness Habits Journal** entry and include their Flow activity goal along with all previous others.