

## **Increasing Flow - Activity Eight:**

Have you ever been so absorbed in what you are doing- painting, writing, chess, fishing etc that you completely lost track of time? You may have experienced “Flow”. Coined by Mihaly Csikzentmihalyi flow is a state of intense absorption and involvement with the present moment. The activity you are doing is challenging and engrossing, stretching your skills and expertise. When in flow, people report feeling strong and officious, at the peak of their abilities, alert, in control, and completely unselfconscious. They do activity for the sheer sake of doing it.

Csikzentmihalyi argues that the good life, a happy life, is characterized by flow, by complete absorption in what one does. The key to creating flow is to establish a balance between skills and challenges. Whether you are rock climbing, skiing, doing your taxes or driving, if the challenges of the situation overwhelms your level of skill or expertise, you will feel anxious or frustrated. On the other hand, if the activity is not challenging enough, you will become bored.

**The Benefit of Flow:** The reason as to why flow is good for you is because it is inherently pleasurable and fulfilling, and the enjoyment you gain is generally lasting and reinforcing. Flow provides a natural high that, unlike artificial highs or pure hedonistic pleasures, is a positive, productive, and controllable experience that does not cause guilt, shame or other damage. To maintain flow we have to continually increase the challenge as the skills improves with repetition. This is wonderful as we are consistently striving, growing and learning, becoming more competent, expert, and complex. The experience of flow leads us to be involved (rather than alienated) in life, to enjoy activities, to have a sense of control and a strong sense of the self. These factors imbue life with meaning and lend to a richness and intensity.

**Activity 1 – Control Attention:** To increase flow (frequency and duration) you need to become fully engaged and involved no matter what the activity is. To accomplish this, the secret is attention. Attention needs to be fully directed to the task. You will also need to match skill with challenge.

**Activity 2 – Adopt New Values:** Be open to new and different experiences and learn until the day you die. The state of flow comes naturally to a child but you have to work at it.

**Activity 3 – Learn What Flows:** Try to reflect on previous flow experiences and leverage these more in your day. Studies show that work is a common place to experience flow.

**Activity 4 – Transform Routine Tasks:** Even routine tasks, like waiting for the bus, listening to a dull presentation or even getting ones teeth cleaned can be transformed into something more meaningful and stimulating. Create micro flow activities with specific goals and rules such as solving puzzles in your head

**Activity 5 – Smart Leisure:** Select engaging and challenging leisure activities.

**Activity 6 – Smart work:** Try to see your work as a calling, full of passion and meaning.