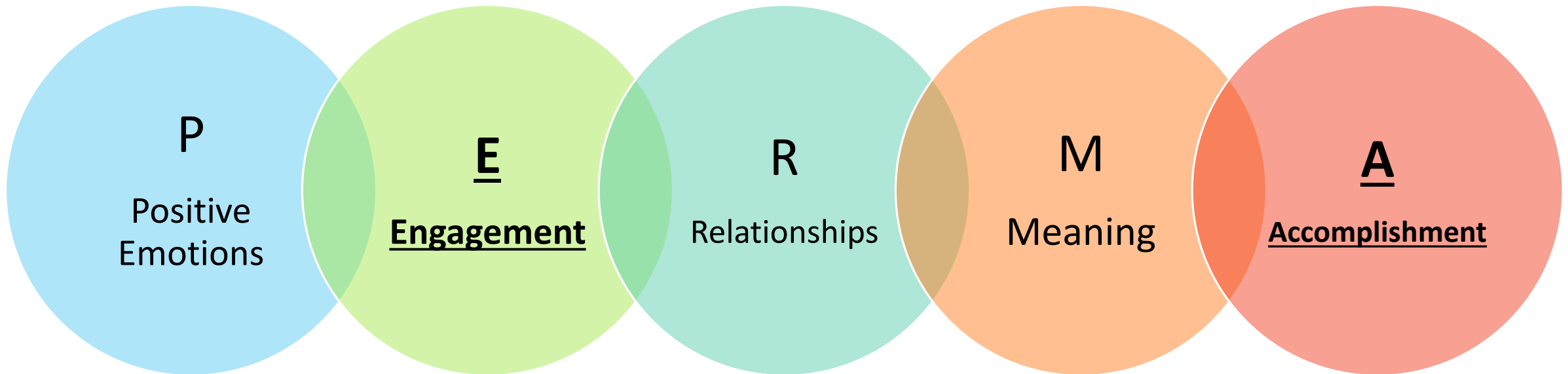




Finding your FLOW

THE PEOPLE PROJECT TOOL #3

FLOW: Tools for Increasing Engagement and Accomplishment





the people project

What makes us happy?

- Many of us fall into the trap of thinking “things” will make us happy. For example, we think a new car, a nicer house, or better equipment for our hobbies will make us happier. Who has fallen in the trap of thinking, if I had a better yoga mat I would practice more, or if I had better shoes I would walk more?
- Things won’t make us happy in the long term. Experiences are more likely to make us happy.
- Certain kinds of experiences are **guaranteed** to make us happier: the experiences and activities that get us into the “FLOW STATE,” sometimes called, “THE ZONE.”

Happiness Set Point & Intentional Happiness

- Humans generally maintain a consistent level of happiness throughout their lives (some of us are grumps, and some of us are chipper)
- We generally creep back to that level (called hedonistic adaptation)
- We can control 40% of our happiness level by engaging in practices and activities. Getting in the FLOW state is a powerful tool for increasing happiness.



What determines Happiness?

What is FLOW?

(Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi)

A state of mind when you are fully immersed in a task and forget about the outside world for a while. Being in a Flow state leads to more happiness in life.

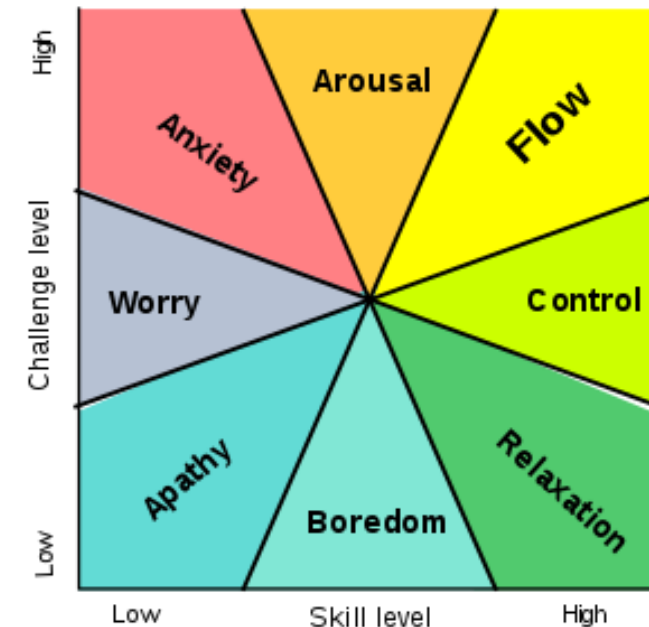
- Being in “The Zone”
- You lose your sense of time
- You aren’t thinking about yourself or your problems
- You aren’t interrupted by extraneous thoughts
- You work effortlessly (even when it’s difficult, things are clicking)
- Spend as much of your life in this state, because it brings us happiness

Preconditions for a state of Flow

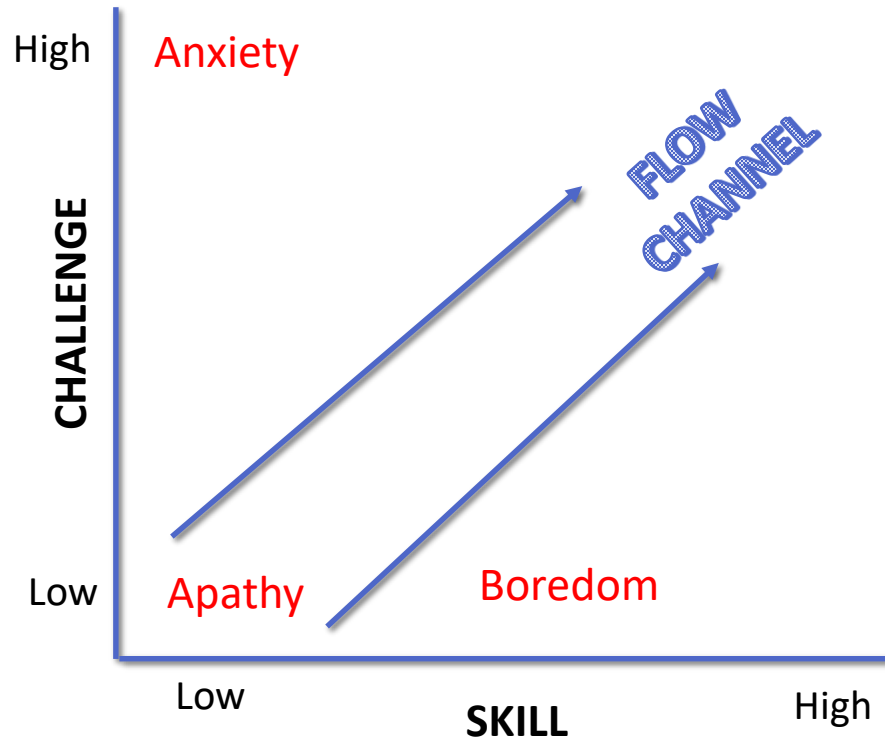


Project Flow

- You must be involved in an activity with a clear set of goals and progress
- The task at hand must have clear and immediate feedback
- There has to be a good balance between the perceived challenges of a task and one's perceived skills



The Flow Channel



- To find your FLOW channel, you must be engaged in an activity that is a good balance of the level challenge and your skills at the task.
- If something is too challenging, you may be too anxious or stressed to experience Flow.
- If something is too easy for you, you may not be engaged enough to experience Flow.
- If something is easy AND requires no skill (bingeing on TV or Facebook), you will not experience Flow.

Examples of Flow activities

Body Movement Activities

- Sports, dance, martial arts, walking, hiking

Artistic Pursuits

- Music (playing and listening), painting, photography, crafting, baking

Home Pursuits

- Gardening, home improvement projects, cooking, decorating, yard work

Hobbies

- Writing, knitting, pottery, sewing, archery, golf

It is how we choose what we do, and how we approach it, that will determine whether the sum of our days adds up to a formless blur, or to something resembling a work of art.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

FLOW at Work

(1/3)

We have 3X as many Flow experiences at work than we do in our leisure time. To increase your chances of a Flow state:

- Choose work you love.
 - We all have tasks associated with our job that we like to do more than others. Seek out projects that allow you to do what you love.
- Choose an important task.
 - To increase your Flow, choose tasks that have the potential to have a long-term impact on your career and life.
- Make sure it's challenging, but not too hard.
 - It should be difficult enough to require your full concentration, but not so difficult you spend all of your energy figuring out how to complete the task. It takes trial and error to figure out this balance.

FLOW at Work

(2/3)

- Find your quiet, peak time.
 - Find a time of day that you feel awake and able to concentrate.
 - Are you a morning person? Do you get tired after lunch? Night owl?
- Find a time that allows for quiet in your work environment.
 - Is this before most people arrive for the day? During lunch break when most people are gone?
- Clear away distractions.
 - Turn off email and other notifications, clear your desk if that helps, turn on music only if that helps you concentrate
 - Place your phone on silent or airplane mode



FLOW at Work

(3/3)

- Learn to focus on that task for as long as possible.
 - This takes practice and discipline to not switch between tasks constantly. When you find yourself distracted, return to your task at hand.
- Enjoy yourself.
 - Flow is an amazing feeling. Take time to appreciate when it happens.
- Keep practicing.
 - This isn't an easy thing for many of us, so continue to practice the habits that lead to Flow
- Reap the rewards.
 - Finding flow at work leads to more happiness and productivity at work



Flow outside of work*

(1/2)

To find more Flow outside of work, engage in hobbies. If you don't have hobbies, try some new activities. New hobbies rarely result in a state of Flow, try these tips when looking for Flow outside of work:

- Aim to surprise yourself and discover new things about your abilities and the activity.
- Choose an activity that provides you with new feelings, experiences, and insights. Allow your feelings and awareness to flow without attempting to interfere.
- Pay attention to your bodily sensations and posture.

*Harvard Health Publishing



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Flow outside of work*

(2/2)

- Overcome the urge to stop at every mistake.
- Accept that physical symptoms of nervousness are normal and will ease off once you get going.
- Try to work or play with others.
- Maintain your sense of humor

*Harvard Health Publishing



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More tips for finding your Flow State

- Don't begin when you are hungry, eat something healthy if you are.
 - Avoid processed foods and high sugar foods that will lead to a crash soon after eating
- Drink some coffee, or other caffeinated beverage
 - Don't drink an energy drink or high sugar soda
 - Have water available as well
- Wear headphones
 - Even if you aren't listening to music, this can send a message to others that you are focusing
- Close your door if you are able
- Schedule blocks of time for yourself and your flow projects



ACTIVITIES FOR MORE FLOW

Not sure? Give this a try!



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Coloring for Adults!

In recent years, coloring books for adults have been available as a way to promote mindfulness, focus, and creativity.

If you want to try it out before you buy a book, you can Bing “adult coloring sheets” and a lot of choices will come up. Print one out, grab some colored pencils or crayons and go!

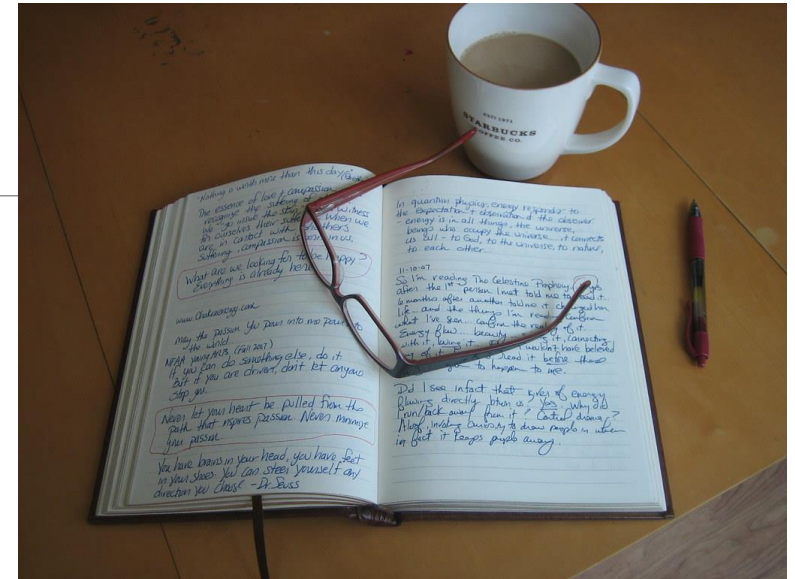
Unsure of what you enjoy?

Try this journaling prompt:

If I had an unscheduled (insert time) to myself I would...

- Fifteen Minutes....
- An hour ...
- Three hours....
- A day...
- A week ...
- A month...
- A year...

- What do you notice about your list?
- Which things on your list can you do?
- Which things on your list would you change?
- What do you need to do to try some of the things on your list?



Try a meditation for focus

There are several online to try, and most are relatively short.

Headspace has one that is free and about 10 minutes long. They also have an option to purchase a 30 day mindfulness for focus course.

<https://www.headspace.com/meditation/focus>



Procrastinating or unable to concentrate?

Try the Pomodoro Technique: A simple and effective way to start a project when you are having problems concentrating.

1. Choose the task
2. Set a timer for 25 Minutes
2. Get to work until the timer goes off
3. When the time is up, take a 5 minute break
4. Repeat as often as necessary



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Make this your own – Try new things

When you try new things and prioritize what you enjoy doing and make time to do it, you will lead a more enjoyable and meaningful life.

You will use your skills, learn new skills, and spend your days in a state of awareness doing more of what you like.

The point isn't to achieve Flow perfectly, it is to continue to add more of what brings you happiness to your life.

“The flow experience, like everything else, is not “good” in an absolute sense. It is good only in that it has the potential to make life more rich, intense, and meaningful; it is good because it increases the strength and complexity of the self.”

— **Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Flow: The Psychology of Happiness**