Flow is the mental state in which a person performing an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and enjoyment in the process of the activity.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi is a Hungarian-American psychologist that is recognized for researching and coining the term flow. He is one of the pioneering researchers in the field of positive psychology.

Frequent flow correlates with:
- Life satisfaction
- Achievement
- Better health
- Creativity
- Productivity

Conditions necessary for flow:
- The task is challenging and requires skill
- Concentration/ lack of distraction
- We get immediate feedback
- There is a sense of control

Key Takeaways

Go With the Flow: What is Flow & Why You Want More of It
What we experience in flow:
- Our sense of self (ego) vanishes
- Time stops
- Neutral emotions
- Decrease in pain symptoms
- Natural, productive high

During flow we experience transient hypofrontality, a temporary under-activity of the frontal cortex. We also see this type of brain activity during mediation, day dreaming and hypnosis.

Also during flow, large quantities of norepinephrine, dopamine, endorphins, anandamide, and serotonin flood our system. All are pleasure-inducing, performance-enhancing chemicals with considerable impacts on creativity.

According to Csikszentmihalyi, “jobs are actually easier to enjoy than free time, because like flow activities they have built-in goals, feedback, rules and challenges.

A 10-year McKinsey & Co Study found that top executives were 5 times more productive when in flow.

It takes 23 minutes and 15 seconds to return to the original state of concentration after a distraction, according to Gloria Marks who studies digital distraction at the University of California, Irvine.

Flow busters in the workplace:
- Distractions (email notifications, texts, open office plans)
- Lack of passion
- Lack of purpose
- Lack of clear and measurable outcomes
- Lack of feedback

(Walsh & Sweeny, 2019) Across a series of 3 studies, found that flow may boost well-being during a period of uncertainty & can improve the waiting period.

Putting it into Practice

Over the next month:
- Make sure to include activities that induce flow into your schedule
- Work on minimizing flow busters and distractions
- See if you can use flow science to make everyday tasks more enjoyable
Suggested Reading & Additional Resources

- Books:
  "Flow" Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
  "The Rise of Superman" Steven Kotler

- Websites:
  - The Flow Genome Project: https://www.flowgenomeproject.com/
  - Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi: https://www.cgu.edu/people/mihaly-csikszentmihalyi/

- Videos:
  - Jamie Wheal TED Talk: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqAtG77JjdM
  - Mihaly Csikszentmihaly TED Talk: https://www.ted.com/talks/mihaly_csikszentmihalyi_flow_the_secret_to_happiness?language=en

- Social:
  I share positive psych tips, tools, resources & theory at:
  
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  head_northbound

Join us for session 11, "Prioritizing Self-care: Saying Yes to You"
Zoom: November 8th (12-1pm)