



MONEYWISE

VALUING PEOPLE. VALUING MONEY.

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY BY FINDING FLOW

Have you ever been so engaged in an activity that time seemed to melt away? This is "flow," and it could happen at work, school, or play. Flow can increase concentration and improve personal productivity. With some effort, flow can be intentionally achieved.

CREATE THE RIGHT CONDITIONS

Today we are constantly asked to multitask. Research suggests that doing several things at once keeps the brain from deeply engaging with any one task. Flow cannot happen if you are not fully engaged. Setting aside specific times to work on projects without distractions can help foster flow.

Researchers have noted eight components that may contribute to creating an optimal flow experience. First, the project should be do-able. In addition, it should include focus, goals, feedback, involvement, and control. Through this experience, you stop worrying about yourself and time seems to "stand still," where hours fly by but minutes feel long.

BALANCE CHALLENGE AND SKILL

Another key factor to encouraging flow is to strike a balance between challenge and skill. If a task is too challenging, it causes anxiety. However, if a task is too simple and does not



FLOW IS ACHIEVED WHEN BOTH CHALLENGE AND SKILL ARE ALIGNED, CAUSING YOU TO PERFORM AT YOUR PEAK CAPACITY



require your best skills, it causes boredom. Flow is achieved when both challenge and skill are aligned, causing you to perform at your peak capacity. Regularly challenging your skill set leads to personal growth. Each time we find flow through this process, we get better at the task at hand.

As the book, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, states: "One cannot enjoy doing the same thing at the same level for long. We grow either bored or frustrated; and then the desire to enjoy ourselves again pushes us to stretch our skills, or to discover new opportunities for using them."

CHANGE YOUR MINDSET

Attitude is a critical factor to achieving flow. When you set out to complete a task, don't focus on the future reward it will bring. Instead, try to find enjoyment in the work itself. Even if something isn't enjoyable, or is difficult or stressful, try viewing it as a challenge instead

of a threat. Controlling our mindset can help us control our stress level.

Flow activities also should play to your strengths. Like to organize? Start your project strong with a task list or by organizing your workspace. Prefer to socialize? Kick start the process with a quick brainstorming meeting. Tasks are more enjoyable when they allow you to use your best skills. And you can find more enjoyment in the work itself when it is work you find worthwhile.

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