

Flow happens when a person's skills are fully involved in overcoming a challenge that is just about manageable, so it acts as a magnet for learning new skills and increasing challenges. If challenges are too low, one gets back to flow by increasing them. If challenges are too great, one can return to the flow state by learning new skills.

One of the components of flow state is becoming autotelic, which means rewarding in and of itself.

meta-skills associated with being autotelic: general curiosity and interest in life, persistence, and low self-centeredness

it has been shown that being able to enter flow has a direct relationship with skill and achievement

Conditions for flow:

- perceived challenges, or opportunities for action that stretch but do not overmatch existing skills

- clear proximal goals and immediate feedback about the progress

you know you're in flow when:

- intense and focused concentration on the present moment

- merging of action and awareness

- loss of reflective self-consciousness

- a sense that one can control one's actions; that is, a sense that one can in principle deal with the situation because one knows how to respond to whatever happens next

- distortion of temporal experience (typically, a sense that time has passed faster than normal)

- experience of the activity as intrinsically rewarding, such that often the end goal is just an excuse for the process

To learn to control attention, any skill or discipline one can master on one's own will serve: meditation and prayer, exercise, aerobics, martial arts. The important thing is to enjoy the activity for its own sake, and to know that what matters is not the result, but the control one is acquiring over one's attention.

"When attention is completely absorbed in the challenges at hand, the individual achieves an ordered state of consciousness. Thoughts, feelings, wishes and action are in concert. Subjective experience is both differentiated and integrated, the defining qualities of a complex phenomenon. The notion of complexity applies in a second sense

as well. The flow state is intrinsically rewarding and leads to the individual to seek a replicat flow expeiicnes; this introduces a selective mecahnism into psychologidcal functioning that fosters growth. As people master challenges in an activity, they develop greater levels of skill, and the activity ceases to be as involving as before. In order to continue expeiencing flow, they must identify and engage progressively more complex challenges. The teleonomy of the self is thus a growth principle; the optimal level of challenge stretches existing skills resulting in a more complex set of capacities for action. " -handbook of positive psychology

meditation has been shown to decrease anxiety and stress, as well as increase overall feelings of well being. these are essential in order to get the mind right for entering flow state. one of the important features of meditation is an increased sense of autonomy! The same effects can be reached by walking (or doing any physical exercise)

the trifecta of intrinsic motivation is autonomy (sense of control, which you can achieve using above techniques), mastery, and purpose. this is the backbone of flow theory!