

Neuroscience And the Benefits of Flow



Flow arises when your brain achieves optimal coordination and integration across key networks. Instead of “switching off” parts of the brain, flow reflects synchronised activity in networks responsible for attention, planning, and reward processing. Your prefrontal cortex (PFC) stays very active and engaged. At the same time, your default mode network (DMN) quiets, reducing self-doubt, sense of time passing, and mental distractions. This harmonised brain activity supports peak performance, creativity, and efficient information processing.

Flow often arises during meaningful tasks where your skills are fully engaged and stretched, just enough to be challenged.

Highly motivated individuals, for example, surgeons in the operating room, frequently experience flow because they are experts working in familiar, high-stakes environments with minimal interruptions. While you don't need to be a surgeon, you can create similar conditions for yourself: choose tasks that matter deeply to you, work in an environment that supports focus, and give yourself uninterrupted time to immerse in the challenge fully. When your skills meet the task's demands and you're deeply motivated by the activity itself, the synchronisation of your brain's networks can help you enter the state of flow.

Flow is not just a pleasant experience—it is essential for flourishing because it fosters deep engagement, mastery, and fulfilment.

Flow Discovery Coaching Tool

This condensed tool helps coachees identify their flow triggers and create a plan to optimise flow in their daily lives.

1

Reflect on Flow Moments

Ask these questions:

1. Challenge: “When was the last time a task felt perfectly challenging—not too easy, not too hard? What was it?”
2. Time Perception: “When did you last lose track of time while doing something? What absorbed you?”
3. Fluidity: “What activity felt so smooth and natural that it just flowed?”
4. Control: “Can you recall a time when you felt completely in control of a task? What gave you that confidence?”

2

Identify Patterns

Discuss the coachee's answers to uncover commonalities:

- What tasks or environments helped you achieve flow?
- What skills or strengths did you use?
- How did it make you feel?
- What, if anything, did you notice in your body?

3

Optimise for Flow

Co-create an action plan:

- Flow Triggers: Choose one or two flow-inducing activities to incorporate more frequently.
- Adjustments: Identify how to make current tasks more engaging by balancing challenge and skill.
- Environment: Define the ideal settings for focus (e.g., quiet, structured, collaborative).

4

Commit to Small Changes

Wrap up with these prompts:

- What's one action you'll take this week to create more flow?
- How will you track your progress or reflect on your experiences?
- What might get in your way, and how will you overcome it?

With thanks to- Rheinberg, Vollmeyer & Engeser, 2003 for their work on the FLOW SHORT SCALE

Rheinberg, F. Vollmeyer, R. & Engeser, S. (2003). Die Erfassung des Flow-Erlebens [The Assessment of Flow Experience]. In J. Stiensmeier-Pelster & F. Rheinberg (Eds), Diagnostik von Selbstkonzept, Lernmotivation und Selbstregulation (pp. 261–279). Göttingen: Hogrefe.

Check out <https://neuronudges.com/products/neuro-nudges-coaching-cards> to check out the cards and for more great resources..