



Positive Affective States: Flow, Positivity, Flourishing

Lecture 3
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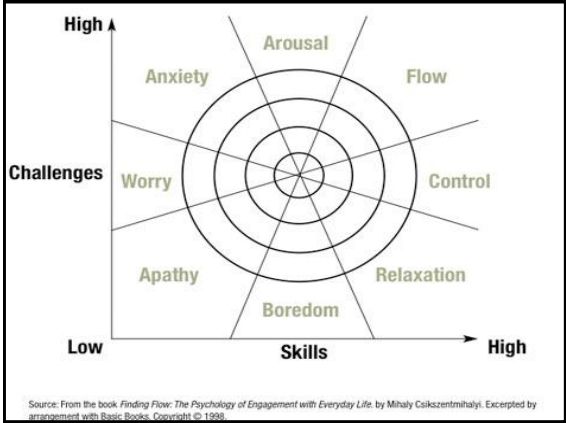
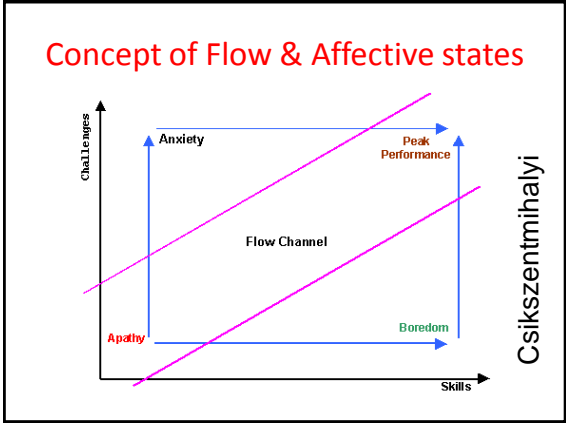


Csikszentmihalyi: What is Flow?

- The mental state experienced during 'an autotelic activity' during which a person in an activity is fully immersed in a feeling of energized focus marked by loss of sense of time and space.
- Generally, flow occurs when there is a balance between skills and challenges in the individual's functioning.
- In relation to wellbeing, some studies have shown that the state of flow alone cannot sufficiently explain all the constructs associated with happiness and wellbeing.
- Csikszentmihalyi himself accepts that people in flow may not acknowledge subjective wellbeing.

Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The classic work on how to achieve happiness* (London: Random House, 2002).

Selvam, Positive Psychology, 2014

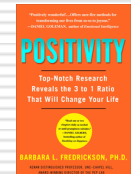



Nine Characteristics of Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1996)

- Clear goals
- Balance of challenge and skill
- Immediate feedback
- No fear of failure
- Distractions excluded from consciousness
- Merging of action and awareness (concentration)
- Not self-conscious of the activity
- Transcendence of time & space
- Autotelic – intrinsic motivation (see Deci & Ryan)

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Positivity

□ **Barbara Fredrickson** works on positive emotions and psychophysiology

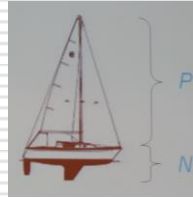
Are we hardwired for negativity?

- Evidence from neuroscience suggests that human memory is better facilitated, marked by increased sensory processing, when encountering inputs that are perceived to be negative (Mickley, & Kensinger, 2008).
- From the perspective of evolutionary psychology, this hardwired condition of preferential memory for negative events might have been necessary for survival: it is more important to avoid negative situations or dangers as a priority than to be attracted toward positive situations or pleasures.
- However, negativity forces us to focus on survival, and prolonged negativity contributes to pathological conditions such as depression and anxiety. While positivity makes us see possibilities, motivating us to be creative and to seek alternatives.

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Right Understanding of Positivity

□ It is not same as 'Think positive' or 'Be Positive'.



- Negativity is needed – but at the right proportion!
- Negativity is part of the evolutionary process – help for detection of danger!
- 3:1 for positive : negative
- Positivity helps us focus, be alert for flight, fight, freeze response; but also brings about stress.
- Positivity helps us see all options, be creative, energetic!
- Applied also to relationships.

Frederickson: Broadening-and-Building Theory

- When we focus on positivity, we have energy to creatively explore..
- **Broadening:** As we explore, we acquire more resources (human, social, psychological, material).
- **Building:** These resources, which last beyond the emotions that led one to explore and attain them, are used to further personal development.
- The positive resources stand by us during time of adversity, building resilience!

Human Flourishing & Languishing

Corey L.M. Keyes

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Key concepts:

- Flourishing & Languishing are in a continuum
- Flourishing = Hedonia + Eudaimonia
- Flourishing is defined in terms of Psychological wellbeing; Social Wellbeing & Emotional Wellbeing
- Flourishing & Mental Health interact