

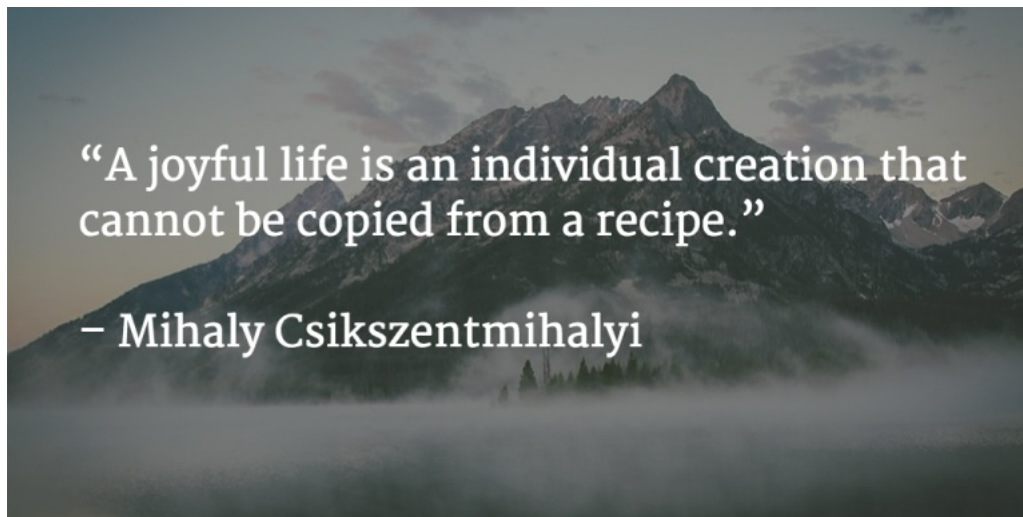
Flow Summary

 fourminutebooks.com/flow-summary

1-Sentence-Summary: *Flow* explains why we seek happiness in externals and what's wrong with it, where you can really find enjoyment in life, and how you can truly become happy by creating your own meaning of life.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



This summary has been sitting in my library forever. I've been meaning to pick it up ever since I read The Happiness Hypothesis, as the concept of flow is mentioned there.

Flow is a simple title for a book the author's name I can't pronounce to save my life, you do it: Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (apparently it's mi-ha-yee cheeks-sent-me-high). Published in 1990, Mihaly digs into "the state of effortless work", where challenges and skills align perfectly and time seems to fly.

Here are my 3 take-aways:

1. Pleasure and enjoyment are two different things.
2. Flow is where challenges and skills match.
3. Life goals are irrelevant, so set a life goal.

I bet 1 and 3 have you scratching your head, so let's do some explaining!

Lesson 1: Pleasure and enjoyment are not the same thing.

This is a really cool differentiation. **Pleasure** is what most people nowadays confuse with happiness. It comes from **sensory experiences**, like eating a pizza, getting a massage, or having sex and **takes away your control of your attention**.

When you're busy munching on a tasty slice of chicken supreme, you can't really control what you pay attention too, because all of it is taken up by your sense of taste.

Enjoyment, on the other hand, comes from **concentrating and consciously focusing, which gives you back your control over your attention.**

This is where true happiness lies, as enjoyment allows you to work towards your most important goals and to go beyond the limitations of your genes.

But how can you find enjoyment? By trying to spend a lot of time in flow.

Lesson 2: Flow is the state where challenges and skills match, so that time flies by.

Flow is what's behind every good video game. It is the state where you are so immersed in the activity you're doing, that you're **completely forgetting about all your worries and anxieties**, and you look up after hours, **wondering where time went.**

How can you trigger it?

2 things:

1. Pick an activity you find rewarding, something that's meaningful to you, without any external incentive (like money or fame).
2. Make sure the challenge of the activity matches your skill level.

The first part is straight forward. It means you should **have fun**. Plant a tree, draw a comic, write an article about the Minions, **whatever you think is meaningful to you.**

There can't be any money involved. Don't do it for fame, wealth, or even religion. Just because you think it's awesome.

Part 2 is a bit harder. Flow is triggered when the challenge isn't so hard you'll **get frustrated**, while your skills aren't so good already that you **get bored**.

It's right in between.

If you decide to pick up chess, play on an easy setting against your computer first. Then, get a friend to play against you who's slightly better than you. Once you consistently beat her, you can move to the next level.

Basically, **flow is where your life feels like the perfect game:** you just want to keep on going and going and going.

So make some time for your hobbies or take up a fun project – you never know what the skills might be good for.

Lesson 3: Life goals are irrelevant, so set a life goal.

I love this. The summary says **you can create your own meaning of life**. To do so, you simply have to set an ultimate goal for your life.

Here's the best part: **It doesn't matter what that goal is, as long as it keeps getting you into flow without caring what other people think.**

This is the best thing a book could tell you.

It's all you want to hear.

Go set some crazy goal and tell others to get lost if they tell you it's stupid. If it keeps you challenged so your skills keep growing and gets more complex as you go along, you're golden.

This is exactly what I'm doing with Four Minute Books. I make sure I read and write every day, no matter if no one reads it. I do share it, so people can benefit, but I'm doing it for the sake of itself.

I have a hunch that the more you do of that, the more successful you'll be.

Flow Review

Second tip: Think back to when you were 8-14 years old. What did you enjoy doing the most? Chances are your flow activity is somewhere in there.

I can't recommend this summary enough, it's so packed with insights, I had some serious trouble picking 3 things. It makes sense from start to finish and it's a very down-to-earth call-to-action for happiness.

It doesn't scream at you to get happy, like some of the more over-enthusiastic self-help books (which have their place, ain't that right, Spartan Up?), but just shows you the path that'll most likely get you there.

He also has a TED talk, which I have to check out yet, but I'm sure is worth watching.

What else can you learn from the blinks?

- Why blindly following religion and politics are just as bad as chasing wealth and fame
- How simply cooking your own food can change your entire eating experience from pleasure to enjoyment
- What flow looks like for a surgeon, compared to an internist
- In which extreme situations flow can help you keep your sanity
- Why an Italian antique merchant didn't sell his figure, even though the first price he quoted was about to be paid
- How you can reach flow while just walking around or listening to music
- What you can focus your thoughts on, if you have negative self-talk

- A way to turn work into a game

Who would I recommend the Flow summary to?

The 18 year old, who quit 3 sports teams already and is frustrated because she can't seem to find the right thing, the 42 year old restaurant manager, who's in a bit of a rut at work, and anyone who has never played a video game.

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