

How to Enter The ‘Flow State’ Any Time: 4 Simple Steps

Imagine yourself climbing a great mountain. High above the ground, you cleave to the rocks. You move very deliberately, aware of every placement of your foot, the angles of your body, how your hand grips every protruding stone.

There is no room for error; one lapse in attention can cost you your life. You focus intensely; nothing exists but you and this mountain.

Time seems to slow down, your sense perceptions are heightened – colours are sharper and brighter and each sounds seems to ripple right through you.



Your mind shifts into a new space. A sense of vibrant aliveness, connectedness and peace infuse your being. You feel in tune with life, moving with a precision and poise you don't fully understand but at the same time relish in. You're in the zone. You're in flow.

Once the climb is over, you find yourself at the base of the mountain and back in 'normal' life. Your mind slowly returns to its usual state of chattering away.

The vibrant sense of 'aliveness' and peace you just experienced is slowly receding and becoming a memory (one you cannot wait to relive).

Already, you can't wait to plan your next climb. You want to experience it again—that feeling you had when your body and mind were completely attuned and connected.

What you experienced was the bliss of [mindfulness](#). You may get caught up in believing that you need the mountain in order to relive that state of vibrant awareness, connectedness and peace, but the truth is that you don't need the mountain—you only need the mindfulness.

Being in the Zone – The Experience of Mindfulness

Maybe you're not a mountain climber, but you've probably had similar experiences. We've all had moments in which we experienced that same sense of heightened awareness. Athletes can experience this feeling in the heat of the game; they refer to that moment as being "in the zone." The Buddhists call it mindfulness.

Sports and physical activity are not the only way to get into that sacred state. Artists experience it when swept away in an inspired creative frenzy. Writers experience it when they get caught up in the story and the words seem to pour effortlessly onto the page.

Some of us experience it while listening to music, watching a beautiful sunset, working in the garden, holding a deep and meaningful conversation with a friend or when we're making love.

These are moments in which your mind becomes entirely absorbed in the activity. You forget yourself and your actions become effortless, fluid, with a sense of heightened awareness of the here and now. Time seems to slow down and you experience heightened perceptions.

The Study of Mindfulness – The Flow State

Leading authority on positive psychology, Dr. Mihaly Chentmihalyi, studied this state of being and coined the term flow (1). In the 1960s, he began extensive research on what makes a human being truly happy. He found that money doesn't make people happy—in fact, his research discovered that there is no real difference in happiness levels between people making \$35,000 per year and people making \$300,000 or more per year.

Things—personal possessions, luxuries, etc.—also don't play much part in how happy someone is. Dr. Chentmihalyi found that humans are at their happiest when in flow.

This state of one pointed awareness tends to arise when a person gives his fullest attention to a task that he does for intrinsic reasons—that is, the person does the activity for his own sake, rather than as a means to an end.

The activity takes the person's undivided attention so the mind is totally absorbed in what he's doing. When you are in the state of flow, your entire being is immersed in the activity and everything seems to be working together in complete harmony.

Your performance level is often at its peak, you achieve an optimum level of clarity and focus, yet you're not thinking about it. You're not judging every move, you're not planning your next move; you're just letting it unfold.

In flow, your 'ego' withdraws, making way for the process to happen, unimpeded— you're not conscious of inhibitions, hunger, thirst, fatigue, aches or anything outside of the activity. All worries, thoughts and memories seem to melt away.

Time flies, but you'll be completely unaware of it, as if you've stepped outside of it for the moment. You become one with what you're doing in flow. Studies done on athletes in "the zone" – the state of flow – show their brain waves operate similarly to the brain waves of those in meditation(2).

Flow is a state of meditation— of mindfulness – that you're experiencing not while sitting quietly, but while fully and completely absorbed in an activity.

The flow state is also perfect description of the yogic practice of 'karma yoga' – the infusion of awareness and action. Through karma yoga, meditation becomes much more than just a technique for the yogi, it becomes a way of life.

So sacred and essential is this teaching that it is the only spiritual practice given in the Bhagavad Gita – one of the world most treasured spiritual texts.

How You Can Enter Mindfulness In 4 Simple Steps



You don't need a mountain, a sport or even a beautiful sunrise to enter mindfulness. You can simply choose to become mindful once you understand how.

In the Yogic traditions practicing 'karma yoga' and Buddhists practicing mindful living, simple tasks are practiced as a means to enter flow.

Instead of focusing on mountain climbing, dancing or other types of intense activity the focus is usually on simply sweeping, washing, walking and mopping.

Practicing with these 'chores' is a method by which the practitioner can come to realization that there are no mundane moments, only mundane states of mind. With practice, the same vibrant peace and sense of wellbeing can be embodied while sweeping, meditating or climbing a mountain equally.

Don't take my word for it though. Try it out for yourself.

Try this. Choose one thing that is a routine daily activity and make it into karma yoga – your mindfulness practice. Make it something simple. It may be brushing your teeth, doing the dishes or walking up or down the stairs.

Step 1. Before you begin the activity, pause, then take three deep slow conscious breaths. Let the mind be fully engaged in the breath for that time and nothing else.

Step 2. Focus all of your attention in the present moment. Pretend for the moment that past and future do not exist. Take awareness to your sense perceptions. Be fully present in the now.

Step 3. Slowly, with deliberate movements, go about your activity. Make it into a meditative practice but with an intensity of focus.

Step 4. Remain alert and keep the mind fully attentive to what you are doing in that moment only– not allowing it to slip off into unconscious mind chatter. Be completely absorbed in the activity as if you had just been born into this world. You will find that the activity ‘comes alive’ when you practice it with mindfulness. If your mind does slip off into ‘autopilot’ simply guide it back to being intensely engaged in what you are doing.

Practicing in this way immediately makes what was previously just a routine chore into a deeply satisfying and enjoyable moment.

Can you challenge yourself to stay fully ‘present’ for the entire activity?

Over time you can bring flow into more activities during your day. This is a great way to cultivate true happiness and peace in daily life without changing anything at all on the external level of your life. It’s a great way to come to the realization that there are no ordinary moments. Every moment of life is a sacred gift and through the art of mindful living, through moving into flow, we can live every moment to its fullest.