

The Benefits of the Flow State

My freshman year of college I found myself in a computer game design class, a topic I had a lot of interest in at the time. Early on in the course, my professor brought up a concept that has stuck with me ever since; the concept of the flow state. Throughout the rest of my anxious freshman year, this topic arose more and more in very unexpected places, Everywhere from yoga, to writing code, to walking slacklines, the concept of a “flow state” was everywhere. I began to implement this concept into my life. I began to put mindfulness into almost everything that I did. Over time I began to realize a gradual shift in my state of mind, my intrinsic motivation increased, my energy levels rose, my overall outlook on life had brightened.

Looking back on this change, there was no single “ah ha!” moment, it was a long process of trial and error, finding what was right for me and what did not work (Personal narrative). Not too surprisingly, while doing research for this topic for this class, I came across other experiences very similar to my own. According to research by Robert Larson and Mihaly Csikszentmihályi, levels of happiness and self-satisfaction are higher in groups of people who regularly practice activities and hobbies that put themselves in a flow state. Furthermore, in long-term studies with a high-flow and low-flow groups, Csikszentmihályi and Larson discovered that the high-flow group self reported higher levels of long-term happiness and greater academic success than when compared to the low-flow group. These studies have been repeated in other countries and the results have been surprisingly similar (“Flow”).

If these anecdotal stories were not enough to convince you of the power of the flow state, just know that people have been practicing entering this state of mind for thousands of years. The concept of “wu wei”, or “non action”, is an ancient Daoist concept that shares many if not all of the same characteristics of the flow state (“Daoist Philosophy of Flow.”). This state of mind is the ultimate state of being, it is the attainment of the purely natural way of behaving, as when water rolls effortlessly down a hill. Sounds pretty similar, right?

Summing things up, the flow state is not some sort of pseudo-scientific, new-age concept. This state of mind is a scientifically proven, ancient technique of training your mind to work to the peak of its abilities. Humans from all around the globe and all across time have found ways to act without acting, what will be your flow, and how will you find it?

Works Cited

"Daoist Philosophy of Flow." *Pursuit of Happiness*. 03 Sept. 2016. Web. 05 June 2017.

"Flow." *Pursuit of Happiness*. 10 Sept. 2016. Web. 05 June 2017.

Personal narrative, Elliot Kirk