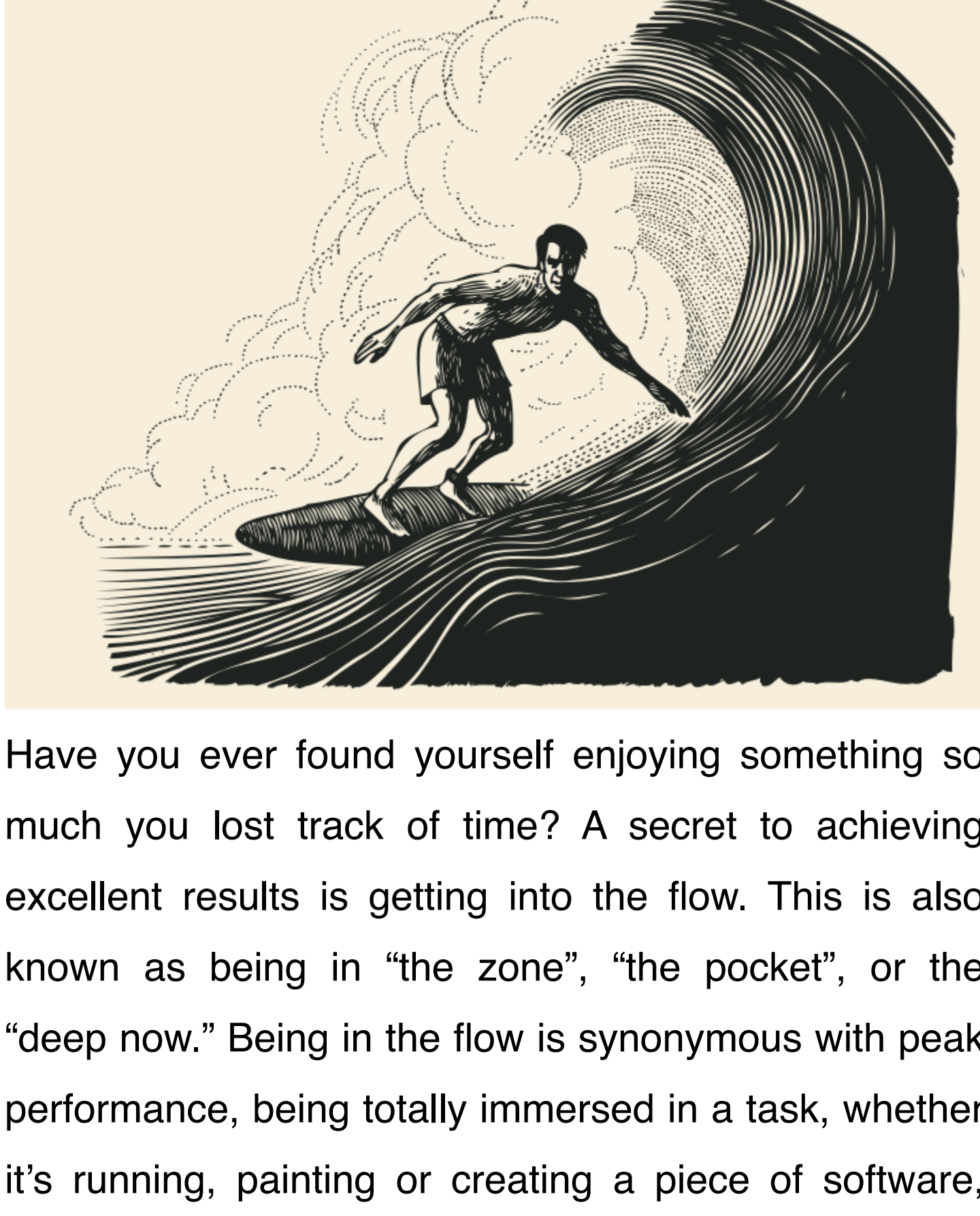


FINDING YOUR

FLOW



Have you ever found yourself enjoying something so much you lost track of time? A secret to achieving excellent results is getting into the flow. This is also known as being in “the zone”, “the pocket”, or the “deep now.” Being in the flow is synonymous with peak performance, being totally immersed in a task, whether it’s running, painting or creating a piece of software, and doing it simply because you enjoy doing it.

DURING FLOW, ALL SENSE OF TIME IS LOST BECAUSE YOU’RE SO INVOLVED WITH THE ACTIVITY, PRODUCING A HEIGHTENED LEVEL OF FOCUS.

There are various triggers for entering the flow state, but its primary characteristics are:

1. Doing an activity for no reason other than the pure enjoying it;
2. Immediate feedback that lets you know how well you’re doing;
3. Being intensely and completely focussed on the activity;

The participant must find themselves challenged, but not too challenged. Somewhere between the comfort zone and the panic zone is the sweet spot - a challenge difficult enough to still be enjoyed which causes the release of the neurotransmitter dopamine in the brain which increases focus, energy, and arousal. The participant’s brain goes into the theta brainwave state, the same state that advanced meditators access.

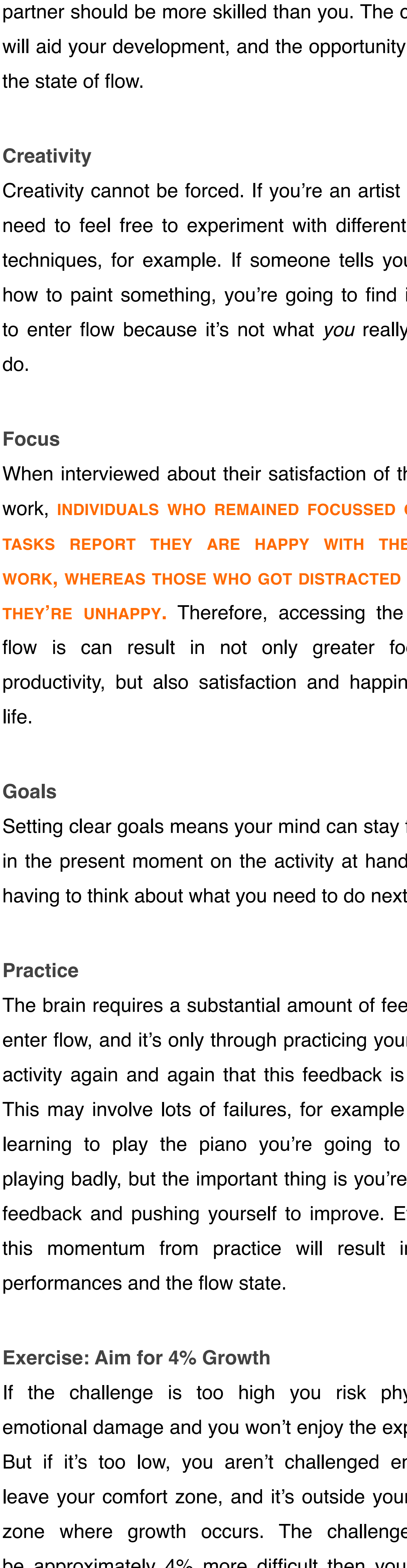
The more important or challenging a goal is, the greater the dopamine reward and the resulting feeling of pleasure in the brain. But if the participant loses focus, getting distracted by facebook alerts, for instance, the release of dopamine will cease, and the state of flow is lost.

Getting into the Flow

Getting into the flow requires leaving your comfort zone and facing challenges. While it’s quite simple to get into the flow, it’s not necessarily easy; **THE FLOW STATE CANNOT BE FORCED OR WILLED INTO, BUT YOU CAN CREATE THE CONDITIONS THAT WILL INCREASE ITS LIKELIHOOD.**

Challenge

The flow state resides between boredom and anxiety on the challenge/skill ratio. When you practice a new



skill with someone else, such as learning tennis, your partner should be more skilled than you. The challenge will aid your development, and the opportunity to reach the state of flow.

Creativity

Creativity cannot be forced. If you’re an artist then you need to feel free to experiment with different painting techniques, for example. If someone tells you exactly how to paint something, you’re going to find it difficult to enter flow because it’s not what *you* really want to do.

Focus

When interviewed about their satisfaction of their days work, **INDIVIDUALS WHO REMAINED FOCUSED ON THEIR TASKS REPORT THEY ARE HAPPY WITH THEIR DAYS WORK, WHEREAS THOSE WHO GOT DISTRACTED WILL SAY THEY’RE UNHAPPY.** Therefore, accessing the state of flow is can result in not only greater focus and productivity, but also satisfaction and happiness with life.

Goals

Setting clear goals means your mind can stay focussed in the present moment on the activity at hand, without having to think about what you need to do next.

Practice

The brain requires a substantial amount of feedback to enter flow, and it’s only through practicing your specific activity again and again that this feedback is built up. This may involve lots of failures, for example if you’re learning to play the piano you’re going to start off playing badly, but the important thing is you’re creating feedback and pushing yourself to improve. Eventually this momentum from practice will result in higher performances and the flow state.

Exercise: Aim for 4% Growth

If the challenge is too high you risk physical or emotional damage and you won’t enjoy the experience. But if it’s too low, you aren’t challenged enough to leave your comfort zone, and it’s outside your comfort zone where growth occurs. The challenge should be approximately 4% more difficult then your current skill. Here are some examples:

- Now, think of a goal you’re working on and calculate how you can increase your growth by 4%. To calculate 4%, take the number of your current growth, divide this number by 100 and multiply it by 4;
- Let’s say you ran 4,000 meters last time you went jogging. So, $4,000 \div 100 = 40 \times 4 = 160$ meters. This means to get challenge yourself enough to get into the flow you should run at least 4,160 meters;
- Here are some other examples: learn 4% more words of a foreign language next week than you learnt this week. Say you learnt 25 words last week. $25 \div 100 = 0.25 \times 4 = 1$. So this week you should learn 26 words;
- If you’re writing a book, write 4% more words every time. Last week you wrote 12,000 words. $12,000 \div 100 = 120 \times 4 = 480$. So this week aim to write 12,480 words.

INCREMENTALLY INCREASING THE CHALLENGE 4% OR MORE, (BUT NOT LESS,) WILL HELP YOU FIND YOUR SWEET SPOT OF FLOW. If your goal is beyond 4% of

your current ability, break it down into small consecutive actions or milestones, each harder than the previous one by 4%. For goals where it’s difficult to quantify 4% aim to find the sweet spot between boredom and panic. Reward yourself for completing each milestone. Rewards give you an additional motivation to keep going until you reach your goal...

To Summarize

THE KEY TO ACHIEVING GREAT RESULTS IS TO GET INTO THE FLOW

TO INCREASE THE CHANCES OF BEING IN THE FLOW YOU NEED TO BE CHALLENGED, BE ENJOY THE ACTIVITY AND FEEL FREE TO BE CREATIVE, REMAIN FOCUSED, HAVE CLEAR GOALS, AND PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!

INCREASING YOUR GROWTH BY 4% EACH TIME WILL HELP YOU GET INTO THE FLOW