

Flow: Channel the Energy

Have you ever been all consumed in the moment, when time just seemed to disappear? It could be during an activity that you are doing or even a conversation. If you have, then you were experiencing a state of flow. When you are in a state of flow you are completely involved in an activity for its own sake—meaning you're wrapped up in the experience and not seeing it as a means to an end. The ego falls away, time just seems to fly by, and every action that you take seems to flow into the next action. In other words, there is no resistance and you are fully in the NOW. This state is a powerful, as it unlocks your ability to fully use your skills, passions, and talents.

Numerous triggers can get us in the state of flow. The four main types of flow triggers are:

- Psychological
- Environmental
- Social
- Creative

Psychological flow triggers are internal triggers that drive attention into the now. It causes an intense attention that accelerates our brains into hyperactive focus. It's important to note that flow provides an abundance of energy that is channeled toward what you're focused on. Flow is a positive state, however when you are in a negative state you can experience a similar concentration of energy—and you can redirect it into a state of flow. For example, when people feel anxiety or even panic they are consumed in the moment with an abundance of energy (just like flow), however they are focusing all of that attention and energy onto their bodies or the flood of negative thoughts. Because they're so intensely focused is why they feel so terrible. They are channeling that energy into the fear instead of feeding something else that would be more productive or enjoyable. In the case of fear, this abundance of energy is created by the fight or flight mechanism of the body.

When experiencing these intense emotions, it is important to remember that you have a choice to redirect them. You can actually use that elevated level of energy to trigger a state of flow. You can look at your negative emotions as an opportunity for you to induce an elusive state that many people seek. Here is an example from our lives. Before we speak to a large crowd, we feel an abundance of energy and adrenaline. We have two choices: let that energy overwhelm us or use it as a tool to trigger a state of flow when we are speaking. What makes the difference is that we do not judge the feelings as something negative, instead view it as an opportunity to be in a state of flow.

Here's an example: a student had waited until the last minute to write a paper that was due the next morning. He may have felt stressed and anxious for a week about it and done nothing, but now that he had no choice but to work on it or fail he this intense state put him in a state of flow—giving him the drive, focus and energy to stay up all night writing it. In this process he lost track of time because he was so hyper focused.

Harnessing the energy of flow has helped writers, musicians, scientist and more because they channel their intense emotions and energy and use it to make a difference and express themselves.

One activity that has become popular in recent years—because it helps people to channel a state of flow—is adult coloring books. Coloring is often a positive conditioned response for people because they enjoyed it in childhood. It also involves hyper-focus as they pick colors, focus on the details and create their masterpiece. It also elicits their creativity, which is a great trigger to flow.

Joeel has induced flow throughout his life using freestyling, music, and poetry. In the most challenging moments of his life, he created songs in his mind. It was therapeutic and fulfilling. You may be thinking, “well, I cannot pull out a coloring book in some of the places where I may feel stressed and overwhelmed, and I do not sing in my mind, so this does not help me.” But the good news is that there are MANY ways to channel it. For example, you can focus on nature or your environment and notice the details, you can think of creative business ideas in your head, you can create plans for your future or talk about something that you re passionate about. You can do your favorite hobby, run, exercise, dance, or utilize one of your natural talents.

The bottom line is that when you’ve got a strong emotion going on, redirect it by focusing your attention and action on something that TAKES UP YOUR FOCUS—it’s all-consuming. Doing so will re-direct that energy in a positive direction through a state of flow.

Ask yourself:

What activities get you in a state of flow, where you get lost in the moment? *(If you’re having trouble determining what triggers flow states for you, keep this in mind throughout your day or week and be on the lookout for activities that make you highly focused in the moment that you may have not noticed before.)*

What topics of conversations get you lost in a state of flow?

Which of these would be easy to do when you find yourself in a negative emotional state, so you can channel your energy? When you’re at home? When you’re at work?