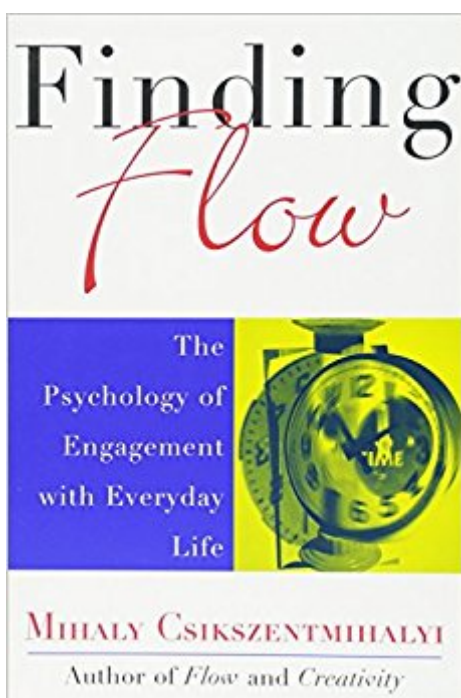


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# Finding Flow: The Psychology Of Engagement With Everyday Life (Masterminds Series)



## Synopsis

Part psychological study, part self-help book, *Finding Flow* is a prescriptive guide that helps us reclaim ownership of our lives. Based on a far-reaching study of thousands of individuals, *Finding Flow* contends that we often walk through our days unaware and out of touch with our emotional lives. Our inattention makes us constantly bounce between two extremes: during much of the day we live filled with the anxiety and pressures of our work and obligations, while during our leisure moments, we tend to live in passive boredom. The key, according to Csikszentmihalyi, is to challenge ourselves with tasks requiring a high degree of skill and commitment. Instead of watching television, play the piano. Transform a routine task by taking a different approach. In short, learn the joy of complete engagement. Though they appear simple, the lessons in *Finding Flow* are life-altering.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

While many self-help books purport to tell readers how to find happiness, few such titles can claim to be based on any scientifically valid, large-scale studies. One of the happy exceptions was University of Chicago psychologist Csikszentmihalyi's *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (LJ 3/15/90). There the author published the results of studies using the Experience Sampling Method (ESM), in which he found that people were happiest when most absorbed in their actions, a state the author termed flow. The current book (part of Basic's series purporting to present "a

crystallization of a lifetime's work and thought" by noted scholars) presents similar material, but with an emphasis slightly shifted toward practical applications of the ESM findings. Public librarians should check their shelves: if their copies of *Flow* are tattered or nonexistent, they should definitely buy this new title; if they have a decent copy of the older book, this is still a recommended purchase. Academic libraries need to have the author's more scholarly book but will find this popular with undergraduates. Mary Ann Hughes, Neill P.L., Pullman, Wash. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Csikszentmihalyi eloquently argues that living fully in the here and now requires that one heed the lessons of the past and acknowledge that today's most seemingly trivial acts inevitably have an impact on the future. -- The New York Times Book Review, Jacqueline Boone

"*Finding Flow*" is the popular presentation of the author's academic research into what he calls "flow" - the state of being absorbed in an activity; be it work, a hobby or a relationship - and how such experiences form the basis of a rich life. Csikszentmihalyi goes over the nature of what we experience and classifies them according to the level of challenge vs. the skill we can bear upon them. He then discusses how we feel when doing these different types of activities. The two core chapters cover work and leisure. Csikszentmihalyi shows how engagement with one's job and pursuing active hobbies provide more personal satisfaction than passive entertainment and mere lounging. It is this notion that will clash with many people's belief in what makes them happy; happiness being something that Csikszentmihalyi considers a fleeting emotion and different from true contentment. As has been noted by the philosopher A.C. Grayling, if we are after happiness alone, then we can just self-medicate. Other chapters examine how relationships are better if you engage in them, rather than merely meet material obligations to loved ones, and what kinds of personalities are better suited to achieving flow. There is a chapter, as well as some discussion throughout, on how to increase flow in your own life. This gives the book an additional self-help angle (which is what the back cover is trying to market it as.) The final chapter begins with some light philosophizing and quickly degenerates into an off-topic discussion of religion, lacking a thesis and coming across as the ramblings of a stoned first-year college student. This is unfortunate in that it mars an otherwise very strong treatment of what constitutes a good life.

A fascinating book about the way we work. I recommend this as a text for education, psychology, and readers who are generally interested in the topic. The content was pretty accessible too.

It's a very interesting read and one that makes you think. It serves very well as motivation/inspiration for finding more flow in your life. But if you already have that desire, it won't do much to help you actually find more flow. As I read it I came up with a few ideas for improving the amount of flow in my life, but no great breakthroughs. In short, it's an interesting and motivating read but it's not a practical guide to implementing it. It does give you the basics, though, if you can figure out how to apply them. The basics are no secret, though: eliminate distractions and focus even if you don't want to. Easier said than done, of course. I'd recommend it to anyone, especially those who may not have figured out that happiness is in the doing not the getting.

Great, easy to read wisdom here. Csikszentmihalyi might not be a household name, but he is highly regarded in his discipline, and he writes effortlessly (in flow!).

This companion to Flow offered some helpful specifics about the effects of different uses of time. It largely reiterates on the themes in Flow, but includes supplementary depth on why we choose to use our time the way we do.

In overall great reading, concise and informative. The book is great, easy to read and what's most important based on actual research. There are a lot of similar books pitching like life styles, yet very few provide the evidence. At the end it gets a bit too philosophical. It feels like the author had a lot more to say and ran out of time/space.

This book is about what makes people happy. It is not really a self-help book, or a 'mind/body/spirit' type of book, which I think has led to some confusion and disappointment on the part of some of the reviewers here. The book does not really tell you how to find flow. It simply describes what it is, and why people who regularly experience it tend to be happier than people who do not. I like the book because it really takes the study of human happiness seriously, and it has some very interesting things to say about what makes people happy. I agree with the author that flow states are very satisfying, and I found his understanding of the requirements for achieving flow (especially the diagram on p. 31) to be helpful and interesting. But this is probably because I already have an extremely good method for experiencing flow. Those who do not will probably find his discussion a bit difficult to follow, perhaps even frustrating. The best way that I've found to experience the state of flow is to pay attention to your breath, breathe fully, rhythmically and deeply, and harmonize the

rhythm of your breath with the rhythm of your activity. For example, when walking, take 8 steps as you breathe in, 8 steps as you breathe out. For more on how to actually achieve flow, see "Living from the Heart", by Puran Bair (my father).

Brilliant stuff

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