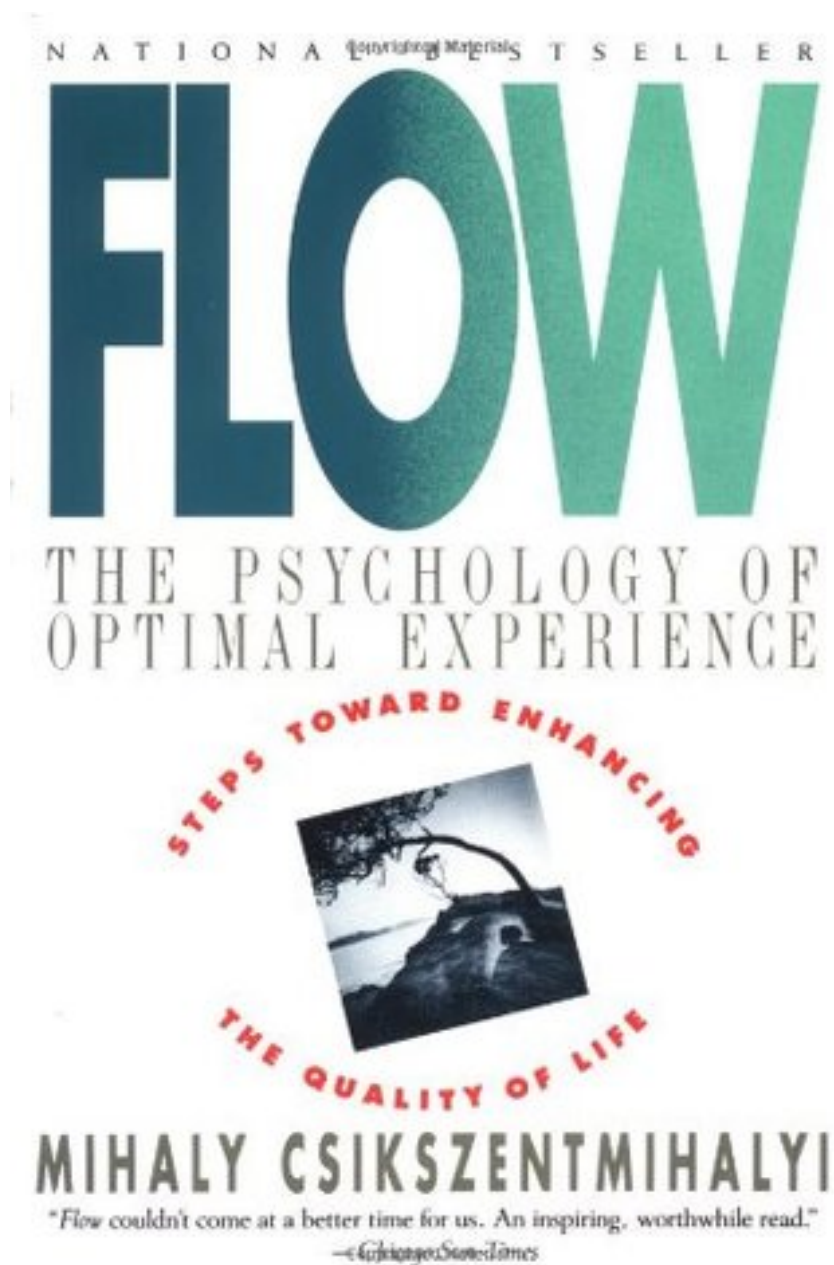


# Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience Book PDF Download



**By:**  
**Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi**

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## Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience Book PDF Summary -

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## What people Say:

### Andy Mitchell

My notes, including liberal use of direct quotes:

8 elements of enjoyment:

1. confront challenging but completable tasks
2. concentration
3. clear goals
4. immediate feedback
5. deep, effortless involvement (lack of awareness of worries and frustrations)
6. sense of control over actions
7. concern for self disappears (paradoxically awareness of self is heightened immediately after flow)
8. sense of duration of time is altered

### Meg

This is quite possibly the most important book I have ever read. Consider it the official "Handbook on Happiness." Part science and part philosophy, it essentially defines happiness itself, then proceeds to explain in detail how we can attain it every waking moment of our lives (hypothetically at least). Although far from a "light read," I found the intense mental concentration the book demanded to be almost physically pleasurable (yes, I am in fact the very definition of a nerd). When I closed

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If you are unhappy, anxious, or generally dissatisfied with the direction of your life, follow this pattern: (1) read the book's scientific assessment of happiness (or at least my summary below), (2) determine what element of "flow" is missing in your life, and (3) fix it! Thanks to this reading experience, I'm on to step #3 now. I feel enlightened with a unique self-understanding, convinced of the possibility of attaining happiness, and determined to eventually experience constant "flow."

If you don't have the time and energy the book requires, read my gross oversimplification of Mr. C's genius below:

## WHAT IS HAPPINESS?

A human being experiences happiness to the extent that he can mentally order his consciousness and fight off chaos (what Mr. C refers to as "psychic entropy"). This explains why animals (and people who fight daily for their own basic survival) experience almost constant flow. The meaning of their lives, the focus of their energy, is simple. It might not be enjoyable, but it's simple. We spoiled, idle folk are the ones whining on couches about the lack of fulfillment and happiness in our lives. Why? Because we are overwhelmed by so many complicated concerns that we don't know where to focus our psychic energy.

## WHAT IS FLOW?

Here's the crux of the book. While it examines overall "happiness" briefly, it is more concerned with how to truly enjoy the everyday moments of life. Mr. C refers to the process of "losing yourself" and experiencing Buddha-like enlightenment/self-actualization as a state of "flow." Everyone "from professional athletes to chess masters and punk street kids" recalls a moment in which they seemed to disappear as a person, entirely immersed in the activity in which they were engaged (this differs greatly from drug use and other chemically altering activities, which are temporary fixes for those desperately needing to experience "flow"). Mr. C collected data from various cultures, professions, socio-economic conditions and stages of life, then discovered certain conditions present during "flow," including:

- (1) engagement in an activity that is both challenging and attainable (if the activity is too easy, we're bored; if it's too difficult, we're anxious)
- (2) the ability to keep concentration focused on the activity (so THAT'S the problem I had as a stay-at-home-mom :)

**Rowena**

"While humankind collectively has increased its material powers a thousandfold, it has not advanced very far in terms of improving the content of experience."- Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Flow

I found this book very intriguing. It made me think a lot, especially on what it means to be happy and satisfied. This is not a self-help manual and the reason I picked it up despite it's self-helpy title and cover is because I had read some of Csikszentmihalyi's stuff in my developmental psychology course an

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The author defines flow as "the process of achieving happiness through control over our inner life." It's funny because I was talking to someone who was pro-cosmetic surgery and they were surprised that I was so against it (barring for reconstructive use). My argument was people do it because they believe they will be happy and it can eventually become an addiction. Maybe my argument was under-developed but I think this book supported my view.

A link to the author's TED talk:

## **Joselito Honestly and Brilliantly**

How must you live your life?

Live it in happiness. But how to be happy? When I was a small boy I would often be missing my father for two straight days only to find out that he had been playing mahjong with friends nonstop for 48 or so hours, not getting tired, or sleepy or even hungry (despite the lack of proper meals). The game is played by a group of four, and when my mother would send me to check my father out from

wherever part of the neighbourhood theyâ€™ve set up their mahjong table to play,

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I never learned to play mahjong. But I got into my fatherâ€™s second favourite game: chess. Iâ€™ve experienced playing chess games starting Saturday noontime and stopping only at noontime of the next day, Sunday. Never feeling any discomfort, tiredness or the lack of sleep. This is called THE FLOWâ€”the secret of happiness, a state of concentration so focused that it amounts to absolute absorption in an activity.

Expand the scope of this â€œflowâ€• and prolong it. Imagine yourself being in the â€œflowâ€• until the day you die. Then you could sayâ€”regardless of your station in lifeâ€”that youâ€™ve lived life to the fullest. A quote from the book:

â€œ!happiness is not something that happens. It is not the result of good fortune or random chance. It is not something that money can buy or power command. It does not depend on outside event, but, rather, on how we interpret them. Happiness, in fact, is a condition that must be prepared for, cultivated, and defended privately by each person. People who learn to control inner experience will be able to determine the quality of their lives, which is as close as any of us can come to being happy.

â€œYet we cannot reach happiness by consciously searching for it. â€”Ask yourself whether you are happy,â€™ said J.S. Mill, â€”and you cease to be so.â€™ It is by being fully involved with every detail of our lives, whether good or bad, that we find happiness, not by trying to look for it directly. Viktor Frankl, the Austrian psychologist, summarised it beautifully in the preface to his book â€”Manâ€™s Search for Meaningâ€™: â€”Donâ€™t aim at successâ€”the more you aim at it and make it a target, the more you are going to miss it. For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensueâ€”as the unintended side-effect of oneâ€™s personal dedication to a course greater than oneself.â€•

## Nathan Maharaj

You know that uncle you have, who doesn't have any kids and loves to talk your ear off every Thanksgiving, and he's a really nice guy, and he seems to know a lot of stuff, but when you look up the stuff he quotes he seems to always have it a bit off, and he never seems to have a book with him so maybe he did all his reading when he was young, but there's no point calling bullshit on him, and you get a sense he's not really listening anyway -- well, this book is written by that guy.

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This could have been an excellent 10 000 words, but I'm now 3 chapters in without any idea of what his plan is and how he can tell one chapter or sub-chapter from the next.

I get what "Flow" is and it's great and I'm all-in. But this is diarrhea.