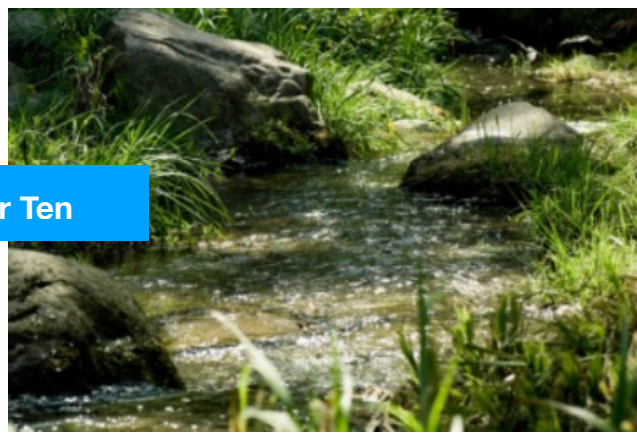


flow

Chapter Ten



noun

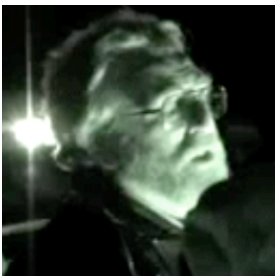
1. The definition of a flow is an act of moving or running smoothly, a movement of water or the continuous moving of ideas, stories, etc.
 - *An example of a flow is a steady movement through the development of a research paper.*
 - *An example of a flow is the movement of a stream.*
 - *An example of a flow is a class session where students constantly offer input.*

2. verb

To flow is defined as to run or move smoothly.

An example of flow is a classroom session run without any problems

In the last chapter I showcase **Robert**, from our third iteration of the *Young Canadian Leadership Challenge (YCLC)*, Keep in mind the this was 2003, eight years into our work with *5-point ear acupuncture*, which was still a silent process, just as Dr. Smith had ordained it. Meanwhile we were always researching ways to get even more from our parallel YCLC which we ran as volunteers. We hadn't quite come to understand what we were dealing with here and so we looked to others to help us define it.



While I will show you a longer movie of the YCLC below, and while I can tell you about how we made it even better, this program of 18 *Ropes Course* events over three days was already something to write home about, creating major change in about 2/3 of participants. At the second iteration, volunteer [Gary K exclaims in awe and wonder here](#): *"I was very, very skeptical, that somehow in the cold and the damp and the complaining, and the aches and the pains, that anything truly magical could come of this. But this morning, on the Ropes Course, that huge burden of being skeptical evaporated, and then this afternoon with my team, it totally disappeared, I hope forever, and was replaced by a great deal of inspiration, and real admiration for my team first of all and for all of you next of all. So I want to thank you and honour you, because you took care of my burden for me."* This was a phenomenon. ***It's such breakthroughs we were looking for.***

By giving boys (and men) the opportunity to express what had occurred to them, freshly, as they "rose to the occasion" the kids (and the adult volunteers) were suddenly heard as *articulate*. There was so much positivity going on here at at every iteration the bullies became leaders, by being able to talk about it.

Debriefing Is Much More Important Than Insight.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi born in 1934, is an American psychologist who was 10 years old when youths hid out in the Hungarian mountains in Nazi resistance groups. Mihaly's brother had been killed. Teams would sneak out, attack some location, quickly create mayhem and disappear into the underbrush. When they returned to camp they ***debriefed***.



Watching his older colleagues **debrief** (*his two older brothers had died by this point, one during the Nazi invasion,*) Mihaly, struck with awe, yet too young to be involved himself, saw these “midnight marauders” as his superheroes. Here were 15 and 16 years olds performing like men. As he grew older Mihaly* decided to make a career out of understanding what made young people suddenly turn into heroes. First he established that those who rose to the top in the war retained their swagger after the war. And so did our newly-minted YCLC former bullies and bullied kids. *Csikszentmihalyi*’s work complimented ours. The change was often permanent, and sometimes, rather than instantly, it took several years to fully emerge.

* **Mihály** (Hungarian pronunciation: [ˈmihaːj]) **is** a Hungarian masculine given name, **It is** a cognate of the **English** Michael and may refer to: **Mihály** Apafi (1632–1690), Hungarian Prince of Transylvania.

Csikszentmihalyi called the state they were in “flow” - as in “*in the flow.*” He was sure it came from their experience, not their genes, So he developed a list of the formative experiences they’d been exposed to and came up with eight categories. Learning maximizes when the following adjuvants occur. They are:

1. Complete concentration on the task;
2. Clarity of goals and reward in mind and immediate feedback;
3. Transformation of time (speeding up/slowing down);
4. The experience is intrinsically rewarding;
5. Effortlessness and ease;
6. There is a balance between challenge and skills;
7. Actions and awareness are merged, losing self-conscious rumination;
8. There is a feeling of control over the task.

The Young Canadian Leadership Challenge Our introduction to **Flow** à la **Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi** was exactly what we needed to further increase our YCLC *Ropes Course* results. And it did, just as introducing, at about the same time (2005) **Dr. Norman Doidge**’s *The Brain That Changes Itself* introduction to neuroplasticity increased our *AcuDestress* results 15% as we applied Mihaly’s eight galvanizing conditions everywhere. We rejigged *Ropes Course* events and **debriefs** on these principles, and our YCLC results got 30% better. Don’t miss this! Here is [a video of the 4th iteration \(2004\)](#) which shows how our program came to operate like a well-oiled machine.



I could describe how we built all our events around Csikszentmihalyi principles but let’s just do one event and one principle: *Complete concentration on the task*. This one had already been tweaked for us. *Ropes Course* events aren’t seen anywhere else than *Ropes Courses*, and are interpreted by trained *Ropes Course* facilitators. So, when kids (or adults) come upon them they are (*because they were designed that way*) mysteries from the get-go - they fully absorb one’s attention. One is riveted to what one sees and by one’s imagination simultaneously.

In working with 5-point ear acupuncture the task has come to be a creation of the conditions for neuroplasticity to occur. Think here again of Csikszentmihalyi’s Hungarian teenagers going out into mortal danger, night after night - and coming home the better for it. Who needed to learn neuroplasticity, their turning themselves into a more evolved form of an everyday 15-6 year old, more than they did? So once *AcuDestress* participants spontaneously acquire *mindfulness* simply by being pinned, or *Citadel* participants, by doing one of the exercises, the next step is to make it count for moving beyond helplessness into “*being present*” to the world around us.

If everyone could see this from the outside, it'd be our groups of three doing the *Odd Man Out* exercise as a threesome, beginning to focus on each others' eyes. This leads to activation of each person's *Mirror Neuron System* by which skills and attitudes hidden within one are made available to the other(s). Folks are quite taken with this, and are able to replicate it on their own. They remember this for months and years and can replicate it at will. So, here too, they **debrief**. People are in disbelief, a pleasant form of *awe and wonder* at being free rather than enmeshed in *helplessness*. And by putting it into words they are almost gasping at what they can newly do. Then they go out and practice it...



Now take *The Citadel*.

The reader may or may not be familiar with [The Citadel](#). It is an acupuncture-equivalent course I created at a time when it was impossible (COVID-19) to do *AcuDestress* as it existed. The first time I ran *The Citadel* we were starting with a group of pretty special people all of whom had completed *AcuDestress*. They were, I soon saw, already functioning at a higher level than most - but many were "oldie mouldies" unknown to each other, so they didn't have the immediate rapport characteristic of *AcuDestress*. Many had pizzazz and self-confidence - and what they had confidence in was solid. There is a certain acting in parallel to where they've been before here, but with totally different activities, *The Citadel* was the inspiration for this book. I've come to consider familiarity with this book to be seen as adequate training to run *The Citadel* yourself.



The three mental exercise activities have all been scientifically "*proven in their own right*" in that each has undergone scientific research and is known to work. The skills available here, like during *AcuDestress* can be picked up within a month. Overnight even! How common is this? Not too!

The skills need practicing like *AcuDestress* skills - and here they are in a group again - an ideal practice milieu. And things begin to happen at lightning speed. Each of *Silva Mind Control*, *Tapping* and *Power of Eight* are taught and practiced in groups. Each also calls for private exercise and *presence* on the part of organizers, quiet, and each skill grows quickly when they are joined to activation of the *Mirror Neuron System*. It's all that's required (*though it may not be the easiest at first for those who tend to be anxious.*) They really don't know what's hitting them but when organizers encourage and get them to **debrief** - lightning happens. So make it happen. If you want great results you can do it just by *being present*. Your presence is picked up upon by the beginning participants.

So, this brings us back to [Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi](#). Remember him? He's the guy who hung out as a young boy with 15-16 year old members of the Hungarian youth Nazi resistance during WWII. (His name does sound Hungarian, doesn't it?) He found these young warriors who risked their lives daily greatly inspired him, Why? Because, despite adversity, they were happier than anybody he'd ever met. Certainly happier than most adults he remembered. Happy enough that he's spent the rest of his life studying what form of learning makes young people happiest?



And later he went on to study what had made adults happy with the way they operated. It sure interested me when I was challenged to build my rapid-learning program for youth - the *Young Canadian Leadership Challenge*. So, if you ever want to get to know Mihaly, here's his talk on [TED talks](#). (*it's not actually that good. I think he's given it too many times,*) *but there's a great graphic (left) on it I want to share with you below on the left.* I actually heard from him when I wrote something that got published saying he was 5 years old during WWII, when actually he was 10. He was born in 1934, so go figure!

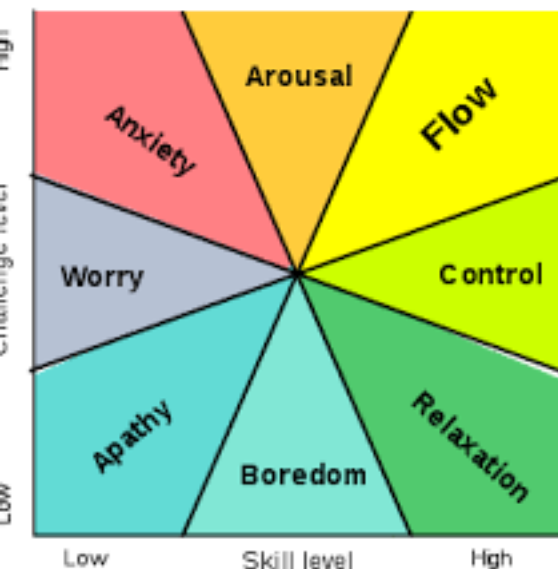
After all, make no mistake, I'm here to entertain you. I want, by the end of this page to add something special to your life, so fasten your seat belts! And when somebody comes along and tells you that somebody out there holds the secret to happiness, you'd better fasten your seat belts and pay attention.

Here's what [Wikipedia](#) says about Mihaly and *learned happiness*:

In his seminal work, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, Csikszentmihályi outlines his theory that **people are happiest when they are in a state of flow**—a state of concentration or complete absorption with the activity at hand and the situation. It is a state in which people are so involved in an activity that **nothing else seems to matter**. The idea of flow is identical to the feeling of being *in the zone* or *in the groove*. The flow state is an optimal state of *intrinsic motivation*, where **the person is fully immersed in what they are doing**. This is a feeling almost everyone has at rare times, characterized by a feeling of great absorption, engagement, fulfillment, and skill—and during which temporal concerns (time, food, ego-self, etc.) are typically ignored.

In an interview with *Wired* magazine, Csikszentmihályi described **flow** as "**being completely involved in an activity for its own sake.**" The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you're using your skills to the utmost." He uses the word "autotelic" to describe this special state.

"Csikszentmihályi characterized 9 component states of achieving flow including "challenge-skill balance, merging of action and awareness, clarity of goals, immediate and unambiguous feedback, concentration on the task at hand, paradox of control, transformation of time, loss of self-consciousness, and autotelic experience"... (in) a flow state, a balance must be struck between the challenge of the task and the skill of the performer. If the task is too easy or too difficult, flow cannot occur. Both skill level and challenge level must be matched and high; if skill and challenge are low and matched, then apathy results."



Flow threads the needle between anxiety on the one hand and boredom on the other. It is a state of ecstasy and accomplishment of abilities chosen by the person themselves, created by being totally absorbed in one's activity, however complex (or not.) It is a learned state. If one is aroused by the inspiration to act, and has the requisite abilities, one can tip into "flow." If one is in control of one's thoughts and feelings, even if one is low in native ability for the activity of choice, one can also tip into "flow"

On the right, girls in the 2004 YCLC are able to do things they've never done before, act as a team, which most hadn't previously experienced. But most of all, even among girls, the bullies find leadership their cup of tea, and previously bullied girls feel a space has opened up for them - a space called *flow*. Many feel ["It's about time."](#)

