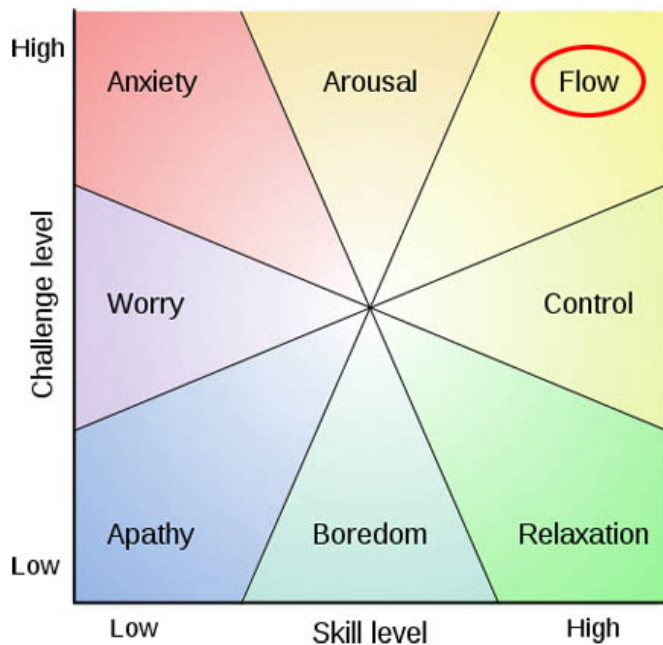


The orienteering flow

As an orienteer you've probably have experienced a race where everything seems to fit in. Where everything seems easy and you just float between the controls. You have had that feeling, but only too seldom?



Mihaly Csíkszentmihályi, a Hungarian psychology professor that spent a great part of his life studying this phenomenon in many areas, identifies the following 10 factors as accompanying an experience of flow:

1. **Clear goals** (expectations and rules are discernible and goals are attainable and align appropriately with one's skill set and abilities). Moreover, the challenge level and skill level should both be high.

2. **Concentrating**, a high degree of concentration on a limited field of attention (a person engaged in the activity will have the opportunity to focus and to delve deeply into it).

3. A loss of the feeling of **self-consciousness**, the merging of action and awareness.

4. **Distorted sense of time**, one's subjective experience of time is altered.

5. Direct and **immediate feedback** (successes and failures in the course of the activity are apparent, so that behaviour can be adjusted as needed).

6. **Balance between ability level and challenge** (the activity is neither too easy nor too difficult).

7. A sense of **personal control** over the situation or activity.

8. The activity is intrinsically **rewarding**, so there is an effortlessness of action.

9. A **lack of awareness of bodily needs** (to the extent that one can reach a point of great hunger or fatigue without realizing it).

10. People become **absorbed** in their activity, and focus of awareness is narrowed down to the activity itself, action awareness merging.

And there are 3 conditions that are necessary to achieve the flow state:

- One must be involved in an activity with a **clear set of goals**. This adds direction and structure to the task.
- One must have a **good balance between the perceived challenges of the task at hand and his or her own perceived skills**. One must have confidence that he or she is capable to do the task at hand.
- The task at hand must have clear and **immediate feedback**. This helps the person negotiate any changing demands and allows him or her to adjust his or her performance to maintain the flow state.