



Improve your wellbeing after crime

Finding flow

When you're dealing with the effects of crime, it can be hard to focus on anything other than getting back to normal life. Even when you're doing well and have recovered your routine, you may feel like your confidence has been knocked.

Getting involved in something you're good at and really enjoy can help remind you that there are good things in life – but also things you're good at! Rather than a simple distraction, we are looking for something that engages your brain and enhances your enjoyment of life. We are looking for 'flow'.

What is flow?

Flow is a mental state achieved when you are happily absorbed by a task to the extent that you lose awareness of time, distractions and the world around you. In other words, you are 'in the zone' or lost in the moment.

We understand the impact of crime can stay with you for some time. Different things help different people, but finding an activity that helps you achieve flow could be a good way of managing your feelings in the long-term, particularly when you're having a bad day.

As well as being enjoyable in itself, regular engagement with flow activities is thought to increase your overall happiness. It increases your sense of control, boosts your self-esteem and makes you feel great – you can take on the world!

How do I get started?

To achieve flow, you need to be doing an activity involving three things:

1. A clear goal or endpoint to give you something to work towards
2. Immediate feedback – from yourself or someone else – so you know how well you are doing
3. A balance between your skills and the level of challenge the task presents – not so easy that it's boring and not so hard you feel discouraged.

If these three elements are present, any activity can lead to 'flow' – what works best varies from person to person.

If you enjoy your job, you might find you often experience flow at work. Hobbies like playing sports can produce flow as there is a clear objective to work towards.



Artists find that they can experience flow painting, singing, writing, making music or sculpting.

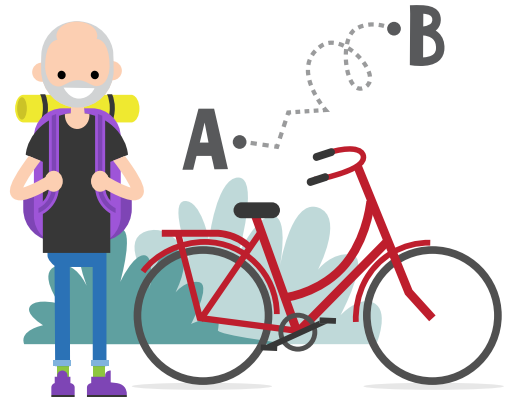
You might also experience flow when gardening, cooking, driving, bowling, playing with your children, hiking, solving problems, reading, doing DIY, playing cards, dancing, working with numbers, gaming, meditating, doing the crossword, shopping... the list goes on!



It's important that the activity is active – passive pastimes like watching TV or relaxing are rarely reported to produce a 'flow' state.

Find your flow

Think back to a time when you really felt 'in the zone'. You may have lost track of time, forgot about something else you were doing, or maybe someone couldn't get your attention because nothing could distract you.



What activities have put you in flow?

Eg an exercise class, playing Scrabble, reading a good book.



What do these things have in common?

It's probably a combination of things, but knowing what engages you can help you think about what sorts of activities you should look out for. Do your flow activities engage your brain? Are they physically demanding? Do they take a lot of patience, dexterity, or knowledge?

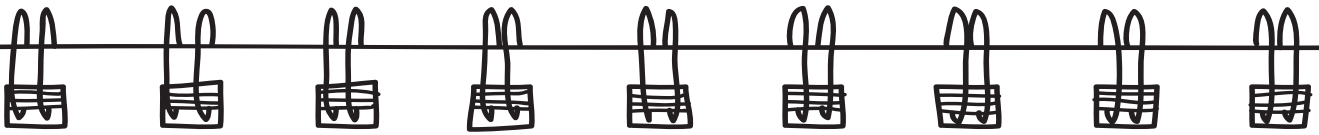


What other things do you enjoy doing?

These may be day-to-day things or fun activities and hobbies. How could you make these enjoyable activities more challenging, or give yourself a goal to work towards to encourage you to get in the zone? Here are some examples to get you thinking:

- If you enjoy cooking, try challenging yourself with some new recipes
- Next time you go for a walk in the country, try setting a step goal, or maybe going further or faster.





Struggling to find your flow?

If you're finding yourself bored or distracted, try making the activity more challenging to help you focus. If you're stressed or overwhelmed by the challenge, reduce the difficulty, ask for help, or look into whether you could develop your skills.

Ideally, flow is something you can build into your daily routine – perhaps with a puzzle on the train or an exercise opportunity on your route to work.

Making a plan could help:

When could I try to find flow in my daily routine?

What could I do? Do I want to set myself a goal?

Who could help me achieve this?

Eg Next time my friends and I meet up, could we do an activity together?

Where can I go to learn more?

There are many books and online resources available about flow. Try starting with:

Online videos

Flow: *Happiness in Super Focus* by The NerdWriter:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=dWcapC-kriY

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's TED talk '*Flow, the secret to happiness*'

www.ted.com/talks/mihaly_csikszentmihalyi_on_flow

Articles

Try searching 'flow' on www.positivepsychology.org.uk

Books

Flow: *The Psychology of Happiness: The Classic Work on How to Achieve Happiness* by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi



Remember, if you feel you'd like any additional support or advice, our door is always open. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.

My local Victim Support contact:



We are an independent charity offering free, confidential support to people affected by crime and traumatic incidents.

For information and support, contact us by:

- calling: Supportline 08 08 16 89 111
- using Next Generation Text (add 18001 before any of our phone numbers)
- online: victimsupport.org.uk

To find out how you can help us, visit victimsupport.org.uk/get-involved



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Registered office: Victim Support, 1 Bridge Street, Derby DE1 3HZ
T: 020 7268 0200 Next Generation Text: 18001 020 7268 0200 Registered charity no. 298028
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www.psychologytoday.com/articles/199707/finding-flow
www.psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2013/07/21/flow-an-antidote-to-anxiety-the-secret-to-happiness
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www.zenhabits.net/guide-to-achieving-flow-and-happiness-in-your-work
Positive Mental Attitude Pocketbook – Douglas Miller, 2005 (Management Pocketbooks Ltd)
Resilience Pocketbook – Janine Waldman and Paul Z Jackson, 2017 (Management Pocketbooks Ltd)