

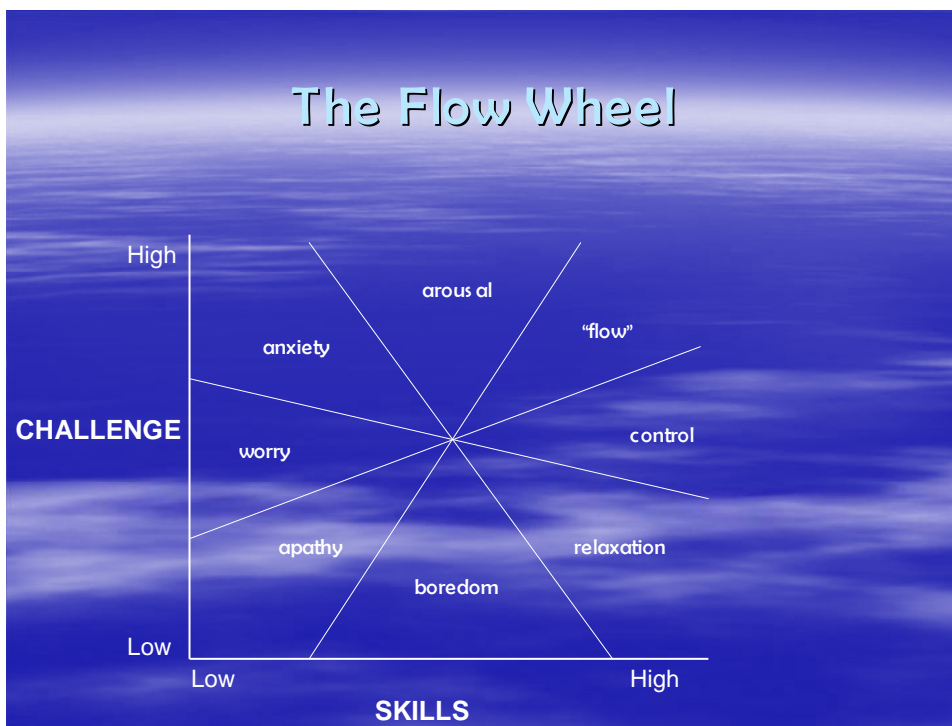
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Go With the Flow:
Getting Motivated from the Inside Out
NFA Annual Convention, NYC August 2009

Applying Csikszentmihalyi's theory of intrinsic motivation to musicians.

Characteristics of the flow experience: full concentration, clear goals, immediate and unambiguous feedback, loss of self-consciousness, distorted sense of time.

Dynamics of flow: Defining characteristic is match of challenge and skill. Skill level higher than challenge leads to boredom; challenge greater than skill level leads to anxiety.



Flow teachers should: Nurture their own talent, create teaching environments focused on intrinsic rewards, see students as complex individuals.

Discussion questions

*Reflect for a few moments on your own reasons for pursuing music. Did early flow experiences play a role? Did a teacher you saw as completely engaged in music inspire you? What motivates you now?

*Can you see how your high achieving, highly motivated students progress by “living on the edge”—constantly choosing to work on something that’s just a little too hard for them?

*What about those students who don’t progress as quickly? Do they feel more comfortable when their skills are greater than their challenge? How can you help them learn to push themselves more?

*What ideas do you have for creating flow environments in your own practice sessions? In performances?

Selected reference list:

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow*. New York: Harper & Row

Csikszentmihalyi, M., Rathunde, K. & Whalen, S. (1993). *Talented teenagers: The roots of success and failure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.