

MOMAP TOOL

Flower of Flow

MOMAP Dimension: Motivations

MOMAP Domain: Specific interest

A genuine interest in one particular destination, be that a country or a professional path.
(Example: "I've always been very attracted to my country of destination")

Target group:

Type of mobility:

Geographic Mobility: X

Social Mobility: X

Implementation phase:

Before: X

During: X

After:

Duration:

Number of sessions: 1

Time: 50 minutes

Tool objectives / short description:

Identifying the participant's sources of pleasure and flow in order to connect them to their activities in the new environment. Exploring the ways to become more aware of one's intrinsic motivations and to make those the basis of the mobility experience.

Sessions:

SESSION 1

Session Objectives:

Identifying the participant's sources of pleasure and flow in order to connect them to their activities in the new environment. Exploring the ways to become more aware of one's intrinsic motivations and to make those the basis of the mobility experience.

Time: 55 minutes

Materials: Coloured paper, one bigger poster on which participant can glue their flowers

Preparation needed: The guide should be familiar with the concepts of positive psychology

Step-by-step activity:

Lead in: (10 min)

This exercise builds on the theory of positive psychology. Positive psychology tries to see how healthy people can be happier. In the context of mobility, this means that we try to see transition as an opportunity for pleasure and flow and to find more meaning in the new environment.

The first step is introduction to Positive Psychology.

Positive psychologists have identified three distinct layers of a "happy life."

PLEASURE is the fruit of our capacity to experience positive emotions. We can experience pleasure in a variety of situations: savouring an ice cream, admiring the sunrise, or having a good conversation with a new friend can all give us pleasure. However, pleasure is not at the centre of attention for positive psychologists for two reasons: we get used to it, and after the fifth ice cream, sunrise or the fifth hour of the nice encounter, we do not feel much pleasure anymore.

FLOW is the second layer of happy life. You can experience flow through high concentration and peace while you are involved in very different tasks such as doing art, sports or even work.

Flow involves a sense of being completely involved, focused and one with the task. It implies a sense of ecstasy or of being outside everyday reality. It is also characterised by a lack of self-reflection, self-awareness and not noticing the passing of time.

The optimal flow experience seems to occur when the tasks imply a level of challenge that slightly outweighs the person's level of skills. In addition, there is a high chance to experience

flow if the person has a good expertise in the domain they are involved in and are able to receive immediate feedback while performing the task

MEANING: Finding meaning in one's life is to devote strengths and skills to the service of something bigger than oneself. People find meaning in very different tasks and areas. As a result, there are no objective criteria as to what such meaning might be.

Activity 1: (15 min)

a) Ask the participant to list the things that give them pleasure on a piece of paper.

What was the last moment when you experienced pleasure? What are the activities that bring you pleasant emotions?

When done, ask some participants to read out their list.

b) Next, the participant should list activities that bring them a "flow" experience, e.g. when they lose the sense of time.

Again, when done ask one or two participants to read out their list.

c) Finally ask the participant to focus on what gives them a sense of meaning. Again, ask them to write down a short list, and one or two participants to share their list.

Follow up discussion: (5 min)

Ask what was more difficult to identify: pleasure, flow or meaning?

Some participants may find it difficult to separate pleasure and flow: in this case emphasise that pleasure is about positive emotions – and nothing other than positive emotions. On the contrary *flow* is about a state of concentration, of being immersed in an activity we are fully focusing on. On the pragmatic side: the ability to reach flow can be developed, it is worth learning about the conditions and parameters of flow. The only necessary condition for pleasure is the capacity to feel positive emotions, which is less subject to learning and development.

Activity 2: (10 min)

Invite the participant to look at her/his three lists, and create a visual representation of the most important elements of flow and meaning in the form of a garden: invite the participant to select the most important elements of flow and meaning from her/his list, to create a flower for each of them, and to use the petals of each flower to write down one concrete way that meaning / flow can be pursued.

For example: a flow flower of dancing can have petals such as: finding a club to learn tango, dancing each morning instead of morning gym, taking the children to intergenerational dance events, volunteering for an organisation dealing with dance education etc.

A “meaning flower” of keeping the planet’s environment safe can include: buying local food, recycling and limiting garbage, not buying products in plastic holders, volunteering for a green organisation, etc.

Follow up discussion: (10 min)

Explore together the responses of the participant on the flow and meaning flowers. As guide your task is to support the participant in making the most relevant and concrete associations possible. Invite the participant to think about how the transition will influence his/her capacity to find flow / meaning? (Or does influence in a during phase)

Closing up the session: (5 min)

Ask the participant what they have learnt about them in the activity, also how they can use the activity to enrich their mobility experience.

Ideas for homework:

The participant can be encouraged to try to notice in the next days activities that s/he finds pleasurable, meaningful and engaging and note them down in the journal or on a sheet of paper.

A follow-up can also be done as homework: ½ or 3 months after the session the participant can take a new look at the flower and mark what were the actual moments since the exercise was done when s/he has experienced pleasure / flow / meaning. Such a check can help to remind the participants where to look for those experiences more.

The participant can also receive as homework to look at the available online resources – either the TED presentations, or even better the online questionnaires (see below).

Hints for the coach:

Ensure that participants have a good understanding of the three main concepts (pleasure, flow, and meaning) otherwise they may get frustrated.

At activity 2 ensure that the ideas for implementations are as concrete as possible, otherwise they may not be so useful.

Closing:

Evaluation of the tool:

The tool has been useful if the participant was able to identify a short list for pleasure, flow and meaning and if s/he was able to associate concrete activities / spaces to have more pleasure / flow / meaning in the new environment.

Combination with other tools:

This tool can be combined with the social galaxy: it can serve as a compass to identify new relationships, communities to get in touch with ("where – in what communities, groups - and with whom can you practice the activities which bring you pleasure / flow / meaning?")

Suggested readings on the topic:

Resources online:

Martin Seligman: The new era of positive psychology

http://www.ted.com/talks/martin_seligman_on_the_state_of_psychology.html

FILMED FEB 2004 • POSTED JUL 2008 • TED2004

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi: Flow, the secret to happiness.

http://www.ted.com/talks/mihaly_csikszentmihalyi_on_flow.html FILMED FEB 2004 • POSTED

OCT 2008 • TED2004 Accessed on 30 December 2013

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990). Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience. Harper & Row
Homepage of Dr. Martin Seligman, Director of the Positive Psychology Center at the University of Pennsylvania, with a free access online test center to assess the extent to which we experience pleasure, flow, meaning in our daily life, but also to identify our main strengths.

<http://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/Default.aspx>

BOOKS:

Csikszentmihályi, Mihály (1996), Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention, New York: Harper Perennial

Peterson, Christopher, & Seligman, Martin E. P. (2004). Character Strengths and Virtues. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Seligman, Martin E. P. (2002). Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment. New York: Free Pres

Seligman, Martin E. P. (2004). "Can Happiness be Taught?"

Seligman, Martin E. P. (1991). Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life. New York: Knopf.

Background information / theory:

What was the last time you experienced a simple pleasure?

When was the last time you got involved in something so deeply that nothing else seemed to matter and you lost track of time?

Do you have a clear idea about the purpose or meaning of your life?

These are the questions regularly asked by a group of psychologists devoted to the exploration of what makes people happy. The direction they pursue is called 'positive psychology' for its unusual abandonment of the search for what makes people miserable. Positive psychologists have identified three distinct layers of the 'happy life'.

PLEASURE – illustrated by the first question above – is the fruit of our capacity to experience positive emotions. We can experience pleasure in a big variety of situations: savouring an ice-cream, admiring a sunrise, and a good talk with a new friend can all give us pleasure. However, pleasure is not the center of the research of positive psychologists for two reasons: we get accustomed ("habituated") to it, and after the fifth ice-cream, sunrise and the fifth hour of the nice encounter we do not feel much pleasure anymore.

FLOW is the second layer of the 'happy life'.

Through his cross-cultural research conducted with more than 9000 participants, Csikszentmihalyi observed that people describe an experience of high concentration and peace while they are involved in very different tasks such as doing art, sports or even during their work. The common features of the descriptions were

- a sense of being completely involved, focused, at one with their task
- Sense of ecstasy - of being outside everyday reality
- Lack of self-reflection, self-awareness, being totally absorbed by the task
- not noticing time passing

Csikszentmihalyi named this experience 'flow' after many of his respondents used the expression or referred to a sensation of lightness, continuity, flowing.

He also discovered that people tend to experience flow in a specific constellation of the tasks they are involved in and their level of skills.

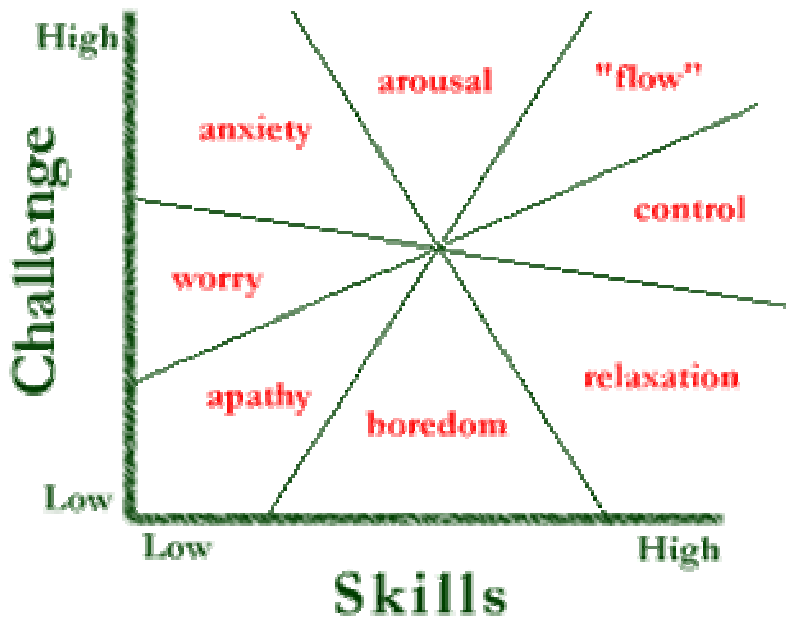


Illustration taken from: <http://austega.com/gifted/articles/flow.htm>

FLOW – the optimal experience seems to occur when the tasks imply a level of challenge that just slightly outweighs the level of skills of the person.

Csikszentmihalyi also observed that there were some conditions which enhanced the chance of experiencing flow:

- having good expertise in the domain one is involved in
- being able to receive instantaneous feedback while performing the task

The third and final layer of the 'happy life' is MEANING, illustrated by the third question above. For Seligman, finding meaning in one's life is to devote their strengths and skills to the service of something bigger than oneself.

Again, people find meaning in very different tasks and areas, there is no objective criteria as to what that meaning might be.