

Finding Your Flow

by Judith Waller, "The Soul Connector"

Have you ever had those moments in your life when it feels as if everything is working wonderfully, effortlessly well? That feeling of truly being "in flow" – aligned with the essence of your being and in harmony with the environment around you... It's an amazing feeling, isn't it? So how does that happen, and how can you enjoy those sorts of moments more often in your life?

Probably the easiest way to understand this process is to think about a time when you're definitely *not* in flow. Let me give you an example... At the moment, I'm working several days a week in the city. I travel in by tram, which is pretty restful as I get to sit and read a book or listen to my iPod. At most, it normally takes me 45 minutes door to door, including getting my morning coffee on the way.

Recently, like many other Melbourne commuters, I had a somewhat different experience. There was a brake problem discovered in some of the suburban train fleet, resulting in mass cancellations (a pretty good reason to pull trains out of service, I realise) – forcing commuters to crowd onto trams and buses. That day it took me an hour and a half to get into work, twice as long as usual, and I had to stand crammed in like sardines the whole way – thus getting me into work in a decidedly grumpy state.

After that bad start, I felt really off my game for the entire day – everything felt much harder going than it should have been. I was very relieved when I made it to the end of the day. As I was leaving, one of my colleagues wished me a good journey home. I replied: "Well, it can't be any worse than this morning, can it?" Huh, famous last words!

I get to the tram stop and stand there waiting for about 20 minutes, but no trams arrive. At peak hour like this, normally one or other tram comes along on that line about every five minutes. By this time a huge crowd of commuters is milling around at the stop. Then a driver of a tram going in the opposite direction leans out his window and tells us that a tram has broken down further along the line, so all outward-bound trams have been diverted to another line. Sigh.

So I walk four blocks to get onto another tram. Wait, and wait some more. An impossibly full tram goes past, and then another... Finally I manage to squeeze onto a tram and make it home at last. And it only took me an hour and twenty-five minutes to get home – yay, a five-minute improvement on the morning's effort! Hmm, not one of my best days.

Next day, knowing that there would still be trains out of commission and determined to avoid a repeat of my stressful commuting experience, I decide to try catching a bus instead. However I don't approach this in exactly a positive frame of mind. I think to myself: "I hope the bus isn't too crowded, so that I can get a seat... I hope it's not running too late... I hope it doesn't take forever to get there, with all the extra traffic on the roads..."

Spotting kind of a negative thought pattern here, are you? And sure enough, my bus ride lived up to all my worst expectations – it was running horrendously late; it was so crowded I could barely even find standing room, much less a seat; and it took forever to battle it's way into town against the traffic. Oh and did I mention that, while I was waiting at the bus stop, I watched a number of trams sail by in the distance. Naturally, *with* seats to spare...

But this time I finally GOT it! I realised that I had been *having* all these bad travelling experiences, because that's what I had been expecting. I was creating a negative state, because of my negative state of mind. So right then and there I determined that my journey home would be different.

And here's how I did it... Instead of stressing about the detail of how to be at the tram stop at exactly the right time in order to be lucky enough to catch exactly the right tram – and in the process thinking about all the things that could go wrong – I allowed myself to be completely relaxed about it.

First, I let go of all the stress... What does it matter what time I get there? What does it matter if I wait... if I sit or stand? However and whenever I get home – it's all good. Then, I thought about how it would feel to arrive home quickly and easily, and comfortably. I pictured this in my mind and allowed myself to feel relaxed and good about it. And I simply held that positive outcome as my expectation, without thinking about *how* it might happen.

That day, I left work and stepped straight onto a tram. And into a seat. On the way home, I realised I needed to pick up a few things from the supermarket, so I got off a few stops early in order to do that. My supermarket shopping experience was an absolute breeze. I went in there with no conscious thought in my mind, but subconsciously I must have still been in a very relaxed state. I only had to buy half a dozen things, but I swear that *every* item was on sale! I only had to think of something, go to the shelf... and bingo... it was on sale!

After the first couple of times I was merely smiling away to myself, but I must have been grinning like a complete idiot by the time I got to the checkout (oh, and in case you're wondering, I got the *good* queue at the checkout) because the woman at the cash register says, smiling back at me: "You look like you're having a good day!" I burst out laughing and reply: "I am NOW!" Then, still smiling, I walk to the tram stop to catch the tram the last leg home and, lo and behold, my tram arrives instantly! Just a slight difference to my previous experiences, eh?

For me, this was such a graphic illustration of what it feels like – and what happens – when you allow yourself to be in flow. Admittedly, everything being on sale at the supermarket may have been overkill in getting the message across to me, but I *did* get it (and appreciate it, tee hee!). The amazing thing is how *easy* it is to create this state for yourself.

You see, the secret of experiencing flow is to focus on the *outcome* you want, NOT on what you have to do to get there. Because when you start worrying about the detail of whether you're doing everything right along the way, you attract all the things you *don't* want to have happen – your doubts and fears will take over, exactly as happened to me with my earlier tram and bus journeys.

When you're in flow, you're allowing yourself to enjoy the moment and accept it as it is, while holding a positive expectation that you'll get to where you need to go, comfortably and easily. Try this for yourself... it really works!

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