

Name
Class

Date

Foundations of Flow

01

I can find my flow state in the learning environment.

02

I can direct my focused attention.

03

I can problem solve when it's hard to concentrate or be productive.

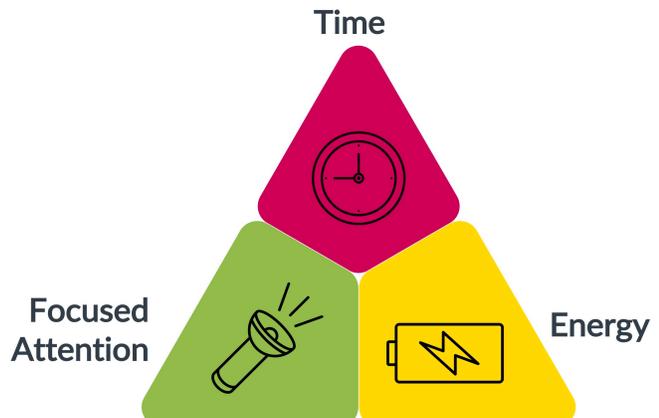
04

I can create habits that support energy and focus.

05

I can develop a toolbox of strategies to help me find flow.

Sketchnote Space



I can find my flow in the learning environment.

2

I think I have experienced flow *outside* the classroom when...

I think I have experienced flow *in* the classroom when...

The things that make it hard for me to find my flow are...

It's easiest for me to find my flow when...

When I look at these 4 factors that make flow possible, the parts that seem easiest for me are...



The parts that seem more challenging for me are...

I think learning about flow could be helpful for me when...

When I think about finding flow, I'm curious about...

Directions: Let's see if you can find your flow state while completing the assignment given by your teacher. Get yourself settled so there are as few distractions as possible, and look over the assignment carefully. Visualize how it will look and feel when the task is completed. Your teacher is setting the timer, so practice focusing your attention until the timer goes off. It's okay if you lose concentration! Think of your attention like a flashlight, and shine it back on your assignment as soon as you notice you're distracted.

5 steps to creating a flow state



After the timer goes off, use the questions below to help you reflect.

Did it feel like you were able to experience the flow state during your assignment? Why or why not?

Circle the steps that were the hardest for you. What could you do differently next time that might make those steps feel easier?

What's something positive you learned about yourself through this practice?

I can problem solve when it's hard to concentrate.

4

Directions: Review the 4 types of obstacles to flow (and their solutions) below. Then complete the chart on this page and the next. The chart asks you to give advice to classmate who's struggling to find their flow. Circle the problem(s) they're having, and write what you would say to them.

Unpresent	Unclear	Unconfident	Unmotivated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distracted by other problems • Distracted by something that happened earlier • Distracted by something that may be happening later 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confused about what to do to be successful • Unfamiliar with the skills or background info needed for this task • Unsure how to get started • Stuck on a specific part of the task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not skilled enough to do this task well • Unsure that I have enough time to do this well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The task isn't interesting • The task isn't meaningful • The process for the task doesn't work well for me • Tired of concentrating and need a break • A need to rest, eat something, have a drink, or use the bathroom

SOLUTIONS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a time to think or talk about your problems later • Take 5 deep breaths and turn your attention to your breathing. • Tell yourself, "I am okay here right now." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask a friend or your teacher to explain the task a different way. • Ask someone the first thing you should do and how to get started. • Get help with the part of the task that you can't do on your own. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your teacher if there is an accommodation or a different way to get the task done. • Get started on the part you feel most confident about. • Skip around in the task, doing what you know best and building from there. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find a part of the task that seems more interesting. • Think about how the task will help you with a more meaningful task later. • Ask if you can try a different process. • Take a short break and try again in a few minutes
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Situation	Problem(s)	Advice
"I'm trying to study at home for a test, but I keep getting distracted. My friend is texting me and my family's being kind of loud in the other room. There's also lots of noise outside."	Unpresent Unclear Unconfident Unmotivated	
"I'm trying to finish a project, but all I can do is lie on my bed and stare at the ceiling. I just don't feel like doing anything right now."	Unpresent Unclear Unconfident Unmotivated	

I can problem solve when it's hard to concentrate.

Situation	Problem(s)	Advice
"I'm trying to work on a project, but I'm stuck. I think I was absent the day the teacher gave the directions. I don't understand what I'm supposed to do and it's too late to get help."	Unpresent Unclear Unconfident Unmotivated	
"I'm trying to get into my flow with the assignment in class, but I keep thinking about an argument I had last night. I can't concentrate when I'm not getting along with that person."	Unpresent Unclear Unconfident Unmotivated	
"I'm trying to get started on a homework assignment that's due tomorrow, but I think I waited too long. I'm tired right now and can't concentrate, but it has to be done before morning."	Unpresent Unclear Unconfident Unmotivated	
"I'm trying to complete the assignment, but it's too hard. I don't understand a lot of the vocabulary and the directions don't make sense to me."	Unpresent Unclear Unconfident Unmotivated	

Now think of 2 times YOU have had trouble concentrating on your work. Write the two situations below. Then see if you can identify the problem and advice you could follow to help you next time.

My Situation	Problem(s)	Advice for Next Time
	Unpresent Unclear Unconfident Unmotivated	
	Unpresent Unclear Unconfident Unmotivated	

I can create habits that support energy and focus.

6

Directions: Write your thoughts for each statement below. If you get stuck, skip that part and try to return to it later. There are no wrong answers! Just record what comes to your mind right away.

My optimal (best) conditions for finding flow

I have the most energy and focus when...

My best times of day for concentrating on school work are...

The spaces (at home or at other locations) where I do my best work are...

I'm most comfortable physically while doing school work when I'm...

In this class, I find it easiest to concentrate when I'm...

I focus best when I take breaks that are...

Outside Time



Has it been too long since you've gotten fresh air?



Take a short walk or just get outside every day. No phone, no music, just the outdoors.

I feel _____ about my usual habits for spending time outdoors.

One thing I could try that may help me get more benefits from being outside is...

Sleep & Rest



Have you been staying up later than you mean to?



Unwind before bed so you can sleep earlier, or try taking a nap.

I feel _____ about my usual habits for resting and getting enough sleep.

One thing I could try that may help me get better rest is...

Phone Break



Have you lost too much time to scrolling social media?



Turn off your phone for awhile and be present in your offline life.

I feel _____ about my usual habits for my phone.

One thing I could try that may help me create healthier habits with phone is...

Fun & Hobbies



Have you been working too much with no time for fun?



Set aside a block of time for doing something that makes you feel energized.

I feel _____ about the amount of time I spend doing activities I enjoy.

One thing I could try that may help me enjoy my hobbies more is ...

I can develop a toolbox of strategies that help me find flow. 7

Directions: Read the article below and think about what strategies help you find focus and motivation.

Have you ever looked at all your school assignments and felt like you just can't do *anything*?

It's like you can't get motivated to even start. Everything feels boring or hard, and there's so many other things you'd rather be doing.

These feelings are all NORMAL. It's natural to want to do something easy and fun instead of sitting down to focus on a task that requires concentration. All humans experience that feeling of not wanting to get their work done sometimes. And because we know it's a normal feeling, we can expect to feel that sometimes without judging ourselves about it. We can prepare for those feelings and plan a helpful response.

You can create a toolbox that holds lots of different types of tools to use when you experience those feelings. Think of your toolbox as a collection of strategies you can pick from. Each tool is something that has worked in the past or that seems like it might be helpful.

When you have a toolbox full of useful tools, you don't have to rely on just one. You can choose whichever one feels most useful to you at the time for the specific job you need to do.

Here are 9 ideas to help you get started. Think about which ones might be useful to add to your own toolbox of motivational strategies.

1) Clear your head by taking some deep breaths.

Sometimes when we can't get our work done, it's because we're feeling a lot of pressure. Maybe you feel rushed and don't have enough time to do your tasks. Maybe you feel like your whole grade or even life depends on getting the task done correctly and passing this class. Or maybe the task just feels too hard to even get started.

Start by taking some deep breaths. This may sound silly or pointless, but there's a scientific reason. Deep breathing brings more oxygen to your brain, which helps you think clearly. It also slows down your heart rate so you're calmer.

Try breathing in for a count of 4, holding the breath for 2, breathing out for a count of 4, and holding the breath for 2.

Repeating that process for just one minute can change your emotional state dramatically.

2) Take a purposeful break with an activity that gets you ready to focus afterward.

If you're hungry, thirsty, tired, have been sitting still too long, or concentrating for too long, it's hard to focus. You might do better work if you take a break before trying to concentrate.

The idea here is NOT to take a break by scrolling through your phone and hoping that you feel like switching back to a school task in a few minutes. You probably won't! Technology is designed to keep us using it as long as possible. And, it's easier and more fun to just relax than it is to concentrate on a task.

The exception is when you hit a flow state. When you experience flow, the break doesn't seem as tempting, and you're anxious to get back to work. That's why we want to find flow in the classroom as much as possible.

So, when you do take a break, think about what kind of break is most likely to help you get back to work and experience flow. That might mean having a healthy snack or drink to give you energy. It might mean resting your head on your desk for a few minutes and just clearing your mind. Or, it might mean wandering over to a window and looking outside so you get to stand up, stretch, and (hopefully!) see some nature like trees, grass, or sky which can also help with concentration.

Think about the kinds of breaks that have helped you in the past. Add them to your toolbox of helpful strategies.

3) Think about how doing the task will benefit you.

This is a useful approach for major projects and creative tasks where it's easy to lose steam halfway through. When you've already done all the easiest and fun parts, you may hit a part of the process that is unpleasant or just a lot of hard work, and it's really hard to get motivated.

Tapping into your long-term goals might help. Think about how the task will help you understand the material you need to know later in the course or in your schooling. When might you need to know this in order to be successful later on?

Even the school work that doesn't seem relevant to your life is usually something *cumulative*. This means it builds on itself. If you don't learn how to add and subtract when you're little, it's harder to learn how to multiply and divide when you're older. So, think about how learning this material or developing this skill now is going to make your life easier and better later on.

4) Focus on how good it will feel when the task is done.

If thinking about the benefit of the task doesn't help, try thinking about how much you want this task done and over with! Your motivation to get something finished can be very motivating.

Maybe you are ready to move on to the next goal or task which is more interesting to you. Or maybe you're just ready to be done concentrating and worrying about the assignment. Envision how good it will feel when you're done, and use those positive feelings to motivate you to get working.

The sooner you get the work done, the sooner you can have that feeling of relief that it's over. You'll feel a sense of accomplishment and feel good about yourself for having pushed through a difficult task.

5) Use a timer.

The timer is a great tool for motivation, especially outside of the classroom when the teacher isn't there to structure your time.

Tell yourself, "I only have to work for 15 minutes, and then I can stop." When the timer is up, you will have either gotten 15 minutes worth of stuff done, or you will have found your flow and want to continue a bit more. Either way, you've gotten part of the assignment done, and that will feel great!

You can also reward yourself with a break when the timer goes off. If you need to return to your work after the break, make sure you're following the advice in strategy #2. That way, your break will help you think more clearly afterward.

6) Look for quick wins to ease yourself into the task.

When you're having trouble getting motivated to do an assignment, try starting with tasks you can get done quickly. Which part feels easiest? Begin there.

Don't worry yet about the part you don't think you can do, or that feels really difficult. Start by putting your name on your paper or opening the file online. What else do you know how to do? Do that step next.

As you begin chipping away at the assignment, it will feel less overwhelming, because you will have already gotten some of it done.

If you can't figure out how to get started, ask yourself, "Can I just ...?" Your self-talk might sound like this: *"Can I just...put my name on the paper? Got it. And now, can I just...put the date? Done! And now, can I just try doing the first 3 problems? I did it! And now, what if I try 3 more?"*

To use this strategy, ask yourself "Can I just __" and fill in the blank with whatever comes to your mind

first. Take action on that, and then repeat the process. Seeing a bit of success—like a paper that's no longer blank and intimidating—can help us get into a state of flow. It helps us find some forward momentum to keep going.

7) Do the task that's creating the most anxiety.

Although doing the easiest thing first and getting quick wins can help you ease back into productivity, it's not always the right path. If there's something bigger that's hanging over your head, you might want to do that first. Taking care of the task that you're anxious about FIRST can help relax you before beginning your other tasks.

When you get the worst part right away, everything else feels easy. You're also no longer stressed out because you're worrying about how you'll ever be able to get the hard task.

8) Break the task down into easier, smaller steps, and cross them off as you complete them.

Once you can see the steps written out in front of you, the task may feel less overwhelming. You don't have to worry that you're forgetting something, because you've written everything down. You also get the satisfaction of crossing off each step as you complete it. You can see how each step you do is moving you toward your end goal.

If the task ends up being too much to do in one day, you can feel good about having completed a couple of steps. This is better than feeling like all you did was start something and didn't finish it. And, you'll know exactly where to begin tomorrow: with the next step.

9) Ask yourself, "What would it look like if it were easy?"

Things will never get done if we wait until we find the perfect solution. So when you feel stuck on a task, ask, "What would it look like if it were easy?"

This question gives you some distance from the problem. It helps you think about how another person might approach the task, or the advice you'd give to someone else in the situation.

The "easy way" usually means to stop over-complicating things, and take action. So when you don't know what to pack for lunch and you're just staring in the refrigerator, ask yourself, "What would this look like if it were easy?" You'll immediately know what the simplest solution is. If your backpack is messy and you don't know how to clean it out, ask yourself, "What would this look like if it were easy?" Try out your first idea, which will help you get started.

I can develop a toolbox of strategies that help me find flow. 9

Directions: Use the toolbox graphic here to design a toolbox of strategies you can use to help you find flow. You can draw the tools and label them, or just write them in. Use the ideas you like from the article you read, and add your own ideas!

Whenever you're having trouble concentrating or getting motivated to work, you can look at or imagine this toolbox. It's full of tools to choose from, and you can pick whichever one you think will do the best job in that moment.



Final Reflections and Next Steps

Decide if you agree or disagree with each statement. Circle the number that shows your answer. If you agree strongly, circle 1. If you disagree strongly, circle 5. You can circle a number in the middle if you partly agree.

Agree-----Disagree

- 1 2 3 4 5 I understand what a flow state is and how it can help me.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I know how to practice finding my flow state while doing school work.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I have collected useful strategies that help me concentrate and get work done.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I have ideas for how to motivate myself to keep going when I feel stuck.
- 1 2 3 4 5 I feel confident that I can practice focusing my attention and get even better at it.

What did you learn in this unit that felt most important?

What will you do differently in your life now that you understand flow?



Circle any topics above you are interested in. Then write any questions you have or suggestions for what productivity skills your class should learn next.