

Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience

Pre-conference workshop, June 29th (09:00-12:30) at the 10th European Conference on Positive Psychology, Reykjavik

Speaker and facilitator:

Prof. Hans Henrik Knoop

Participants:

Everyone interested in state-of-the-art flow research and application to own daily life

Learning outcomes

- *Participants will get an easily accessible, yet comprehensive overview of the state-of-the-art in flow theory and flow-informed practice in diverse fields.*
- *Participants are invited to share experiences of where they easily find flow and where they really would like to, but find it hard. During the workshop it will be possible to share these experiences along with research-based ideas regarding how best to make use of them.*

Background

The theory of flow by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2020) has been called the most beautiful theory in psychology. And for good reasons. It is based on some of the most general and abstract laws of nature, such as theories of thermodynamics and evolution, yet it is clarifying the unfolding of these laws in the most unique and concrete ways known to us: our personal, conscious experiences of being alive. Thus, simultaneous, finding flow is finding the Universe within you, and finding yourself at home in the endless Universe.

The theory has been spectacularly successful, and has been applied to education, work, sports, arts, family life, technology and design around the Globe. "Flow" has become a

household term, in part due to its great explanatory power, in part due to the mounting distractions many are faced with as the complexity of society continues to increase. Indeed, whenever we are overwhelmed by information, whenever we find it hard to concentrate, focus, avoid distraction, understanding flow may be not only helpful, but crucial, for our health and wellbeing.

Thus, being in flow is not about selfish disengagement with world as some would have it. It is the exact opposite. It is about true engagement in whatever we choose to attend to. And while true engagement is not sufficient for virtuous living, it is certainly necessary.

In other words, the capacity to enter, and stay in, flow in these turbulent times is of primary importance to ourselves and those who depend on us. So how do we build this capacity, in ourselves, and in our surroundings?

Content

This workshop lays out the scientific state-of-the-art of flow-theory along with some of the best evidence-based applications out there relating to education, work, and personal life. Special methodologies for entering flow and staying in flow are introduced and experienced. Also, potential limitations and problems with addiction related to flow are discussed with a focus on how to effectively avoid these.

Participants are invited to engage in interactive exercises and discussions, based on their personal interest, and, with a little luck, acquire a scientific account of what William Blake felt while writing his famous poem: "To see a world in a grain of sand, or heaven in a wildflower. Hold infinity in the palm of your hand, and eternity in an hour."



Bio

Hans Henrik Knoop is Associate Professor at Aarhus University, Denmark, and Extraordinary Professor at North West University, South Africa. He is an international expert on flow, and his work is focused on flourishing in education, work, and society with a strong interdisciplinary approach. His research within positive psychology has involved thousands of educators and leaders, and data on well-being from almost half a million Danish pupils.

At Aarhus University he has co-directed the Master Program of Positive Psychology and headed the Research unit for Positive Psychology for a decade. He is founding member of IPPA, has served on the IPPA Board of Directors, and he is past President of ENPP, the European Network for Positive Psychology.

Hans Henrik Knoop has authored and co-authored more than 200 publications including 9 books, and he currently serves as Associate Editor for the Positive Psychology Section at *Frontiers in Psychology*, a role for which he was awarded Outstanding Associate Editor in 2021. He has delivered more than thousand invited keynotes and lectures in Denmark and at international conferences around the world, and he is a frequent commentator in newspapers, radio and television on matters of learning, creativity, ethics, and positive psychology.