**Accessing Greater Strength and Creativity Through Mental Control**

If you’re interested in the concept of heightening human performance and getting the very most out of your brain and body, then chances are you will have come across the subject of flow states. Flow states are a mental state synonymous with heightened awareness and reflexes, when we are completely focussed and all distracting thoughts melt away.

Flow states get a *lot* of positive attention and this is deserved for the most part; but they are often treated as a ‘cure all’ for our performance, along with increased mindfulness.

Right now, all the literature regarding our mental health seems to be around ‘being in the moment’ or focussing more.

But there is always a danger with something like this that we will become overly enamored with a single solution. Like a fad diet, we can end up getting carried away with one solution and end up trying to apply it to every aspect of our lives.

Flow states are not the answer to everything and they should not be relied upon in every situation. And while being in your own head can be a bad thing, it can also actually be a very *good* thing.

**The Default Mode Network**

Consider the default mode network for instance. This is a network of brain regions that activates in the brain when we are daydreaming, planning ahead or generally completely detached from reality. It often sees activation when we engage in repetitive, manual tasks and allow our mind to wander.

This is in many ways the *opposite* of a flow state, but that doesn’t mean it is a bad thing. After all, the ability to think ahead, to imagine and to create is what makes us human… and it’s also where many of our best ideas come from.

Einstein was almost *certainly* using the default mode network when he came up with his theory of Special Relativity. He was working in a patent office at the time and he even credits the menial work with helping him to flex his imaginative muscles.

So yes, be ‘mindful’ and aim for ‘flow’ but don’t forget that there are other useful mental states out there too.

**Ultimate Strength**

At the other end of the spectrum, what happens when you go *passed* a flow state? What happens when you become more aroused and alert than you ever have before?

This may be what causes a state known as ‘hysterical strength’. If you’ve heard stories of Mothers who have lifted cars off of their trapped children, then that’s what scientists now suspect hysterical strength to be.

Normally, you are only capable of recruiting 30% (average) to 60% (highly trained athlete) of your muscle fiber at once. This protects the body from harm and prevents us from becoming completely fatigued. But when you are in a life-or-death situation, adrenaline is released and this actually increases muscle fiber recruitment to a large extent – studies show that even shouting in the gym can trigger the release of enough adrenaline to cause marginal increases in strength.

So, when you see red and your body is awash with these hormones, it appears that you are actually capable of tapping into immense reserves of super-human strength. It’s not something that has been thoroughly researched or even proven, but it’s a fascinating concept and it demonstrates just how much untapped potential our minds and bodies are hiding.