**Flow States**

The brain veers between states of arousal and relaxation but within these two extremes are a number of specific states that we might consider to be more desirable than others when it comes to work and performance.

One such state is the much vaunted ‘flow state’. This is the subject of much research at the moment and has gained a lot of interest online too. The flow state is a kind of ‘productivity panacea’ that is often described as being the highest state of human performance. In a flow state, you are completely fixated on the task at hand, completely turned off to distractions and able to process information much more quickly. You forget to get up to pee, you forget to eat and you put out your best work.

In sports, the flow state occurs when time seems to slow down to a crawl and you catch a ball you never normally could. It also happens in conversation, when you lose track of time and realize you’ve stayed up talking until 3am. And according to some surveys, the very most productivity startups and even CTOs spend the majority of their time in this state.

**What is a Flow State?**

From a neurological point of view, flow states can be described as temporary hypofrontality. This means that the frontal regions of the brain have become completely suppressed due to inactivity, leaving you only able to react and respond to what is happening in the moment. This removes any self-doubt and any hesitation.

It is triggered, reportedly, by the release of neurotransmitters: norepinephrine, dopamine and adenosine. Which equates to ‘stress’ plus ‘bliss’ (adenosine is the ‘bliss’ hormone and is associated with marijuana use). You could create a theoretical ‘stack’ to try and reproduce this feeling.

So how do you trigger a flow state? In essence, this seems to be the natural response to something that we believe is *highly* important and *highly* fascinating, but without being frightening. It’s being completely enthralled, thrilled and passionate about what you are doing.

You can trigger this by using a number of ‘flow triggers’. Some organizations have built swings and balance boards designed to create just the right amount of risk and excitement. Other flow triggers include novel environments.

But the most important thing is that you love what you’re doing and that you *want* to remain completely focussed on that subject matter. If you are struggling to get into flow while writing an essay, it is probably because you don’t find it *intrinsically* rewarding or motivating. The best solution? Find a task that you *do* find interesting and fascinating.