

From the Planners' Bookshelf...

From...The New York Times.

"CONTENTMENT IS HARD WORK"

By Carol Tavis, March 18, 1990

Read the review of *FLOW* at: <https://www.nytimes.com/1990/03/18/books/contentment-is-hard-work.html?smid=em-share>

Years ago I came upon a melancholy fact: As the popularity of television increased in the 1950's and 60's, the number of inventors and do-it-yourselfers declined precipitously. This sad phenomenon reflects the paradox of the pursuit of happiness. Given a choice, many people choose narcotic pleasures that dull the mind and quell its restless search for meaning. Yet in so doing, those people give up the very activities that, in their complexity and challenge, offer the promise of real satisfaction.

For 20 years, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, a professor of psychology at the University of Chicago, has been investigating the concept he calls flow - the state of involved enchantment that lies between boredom and anxiety. A person in flow is mentally involved

in the challenge and intrinsic pleasure of the activity (and hence is not bored), yet lacks self-consciousness and apprehension about performance (the hallmarks of anxiety). Flow takes energy and effort; it is not the same as fun, the teen-ager's grail, nor one of those moments of pure joy that seem to spring from nowhere. And it is not the same as the passive selflessness of "going with the flow." Usually, says Mr. Csikszentmihalyi, people experience flow while pursuing a goal, in the context of a set of rules. The goal may be a paramount ambition (building a better mousetrap), an interim ambition to improve a specific skill (walking a little farther on the exercise program today), or a temporary goal to keep from being bored to death (getting through a dull lecture by thinking of 436 uses for a brick).

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FLOW

The Psychology of Optimal Experience.

By Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.
303 pp. New York: Harper & Row.
\$21.95. LINK:
<https://www.amazon.com/Flow-Psychology-Experience-Perennial-Classics-ebook/dp/B000W94FE6>

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

The best moments in our lives are not the passive, receptive, relaxing times... The best moments usually occur if a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, 1990