



FLOW

This strategy is suggested in the 11-14 BrainWaves lesson:

Finding flow

About the strategy

Flow is a psychological state of deep focus and absorption in an activity, where a person becomes fully immersed in what they are doing. During flow, individuals often lose track of time, feel a sense of control, and experience a balance between challenge and skill. Flow occurs when a task is engaging enough to stretch someone's abilities, but not so difficult that it causes anxiety or frustration.

Finding flow can support wellbeing by helping young people feel more motivated, confident and engaged. Activities that encourage flow can improve mood, reduce stress, and support a sense of purpose and enjoyment. Flow experiences are commonly reported during creative activities, sports, learning, problem-solving and hobbies, and can help adolescents develop resilience and intrinsic motivation.

The scientific evidence behind the strategy

Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi introduced the concept of flow and demonstrated its strong connection to wellbeing, motivation and positive emotional experiences.

Csikszentmihalyi's research on adolescents found that young people who experienced flow more frequently were more likely to spend time in active, structured leisure activities such as sports, hobbies, creative pursuits, and academic work. These activities were associated with higher engagement, motivation, and enjoyment. In contrast, passive leisure activities such as watching television were less likely to produce flow and were associated with lower levels of engagement.

- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Csikszentmihalyi, I. S. (Eds.). (1988). *Optimal Experience: Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness*. Cambridge University Press.

Further research has found flow to be associated of with higher emotional wellbeing

- Bassi, M., et al. (2022). *Flow Experience and Emotional Well-Being among Italian Adolescents during the COVID-19 Pandemic*. *The Journal of Psychology*, 156(6), 395–413.

Further reading

This article provides an accessible introduction to flow and how it supports wellbeing:

<https://positivepsychology.com/flow-activities/>