

[00:00:00] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Welcome back to the Flex Diet Podcast. I'm your host, Dr. Mike T. Nelson. On this podcast, we talk about all things to improve body composition via more muscle strength and less fat and doing it all within a flexible framework without destroying your health in the process. Today on the podcast, we have Brandon Day, and we're talking all about the concept of flow.

which you probably have heard of this concept before, but if not Brandon and I talk about what exactly it is what are some things you can do to increase your chance of getting into flow, some of the intricacies of it and a whole lot more. So super interesting podcast. Huge thanks to Brandon for sharing all of his knowledge here with us.

And on the sponsors portion, we've got the FlexDiet cert, which opens again on June 17th, 2024. It'll be open for one week. Go to flexdiet.com to get all the information there. Or if you have any questions on it, you can email me. This is the certification. If you're looking for the best ways to increase It's your use of recovery strategies, especially nutrition, for recovery, body composition, and performance.

I have been working on the ideas in this cert since I started my PhD. So going back to almost 13 years now. It is a melding of the concepts of metabolic flexibility and flexible dieting. And I've used this on literally hundreds of people, just myself. And through the certification, we've been able to work with hundreds more people, which has been awesome.

The nice part about the cert is you'll learn the big picture or the concepts of metabolic flexibility and flexible dieting. What are also the intricacies of each one of the eight interventions that make it up everything from protein, fats, carbohydrates, talk a little bit about ketones, basic exercise, meat, sleep, micronutrients, fasting, and much more.

So you'll learn the details of each one of those in a one hour video. So you'll understand what does the science say? What are the things we should do? And then for each one, you'll have five explicit action items within the FlexDiet system. So you will know exactly what is the next action item yourself or your clients need to do next.

One of the things I didn't like about some of the certifications that are out there is you They were either really good on the information side, and you were left on your own to figure out how to apply it. Or, they were pretty good on the

application side, but their rationale for why they were doing it was sometimes completely wrong or non-existent.

So this is a melding of those both components along with the big picture. So you understand the context of when to apply each one of those. That opens June 17th. Go to flexdiet.com. Also we've got, if you're looking for an exogenous ketone we have Tecton. I will have a conflict of interest since I am a scientific advisor and ambassador for them.

What I found best about using all these exogenous ketones is especially now that I got back from South Padre and the last couple of days, I've just been pretty tired. Sleep has been a lot lower. I've been doing more sleep the past two nights, and I find in those particular cases, the use of ketones really helps me get back to baseline.

I'm not really sure it takes me above baseline, such as stimulants like caffeine but the nice part is it's not a stimulant. It is another energy source, and you can use it also later in the day, which I find is one of the big benefits if I'm doing some writing. Or I'm going to do aerobic session or even a lifting session later in the day.

I don't want to use caffeine or something that's going to keep me up at night. I find the use of higher doses of ketones to be quite effective, which I was still surprised by that. So check them out. I'll go to the link below. There'll be a code you can use Dr. Mike to save 20%. And then we also have the Flex4 question.

Four things briefly people should do in order to get into a flow state. And you can listen to that at MikeTNelson.com/flex4 flex the number four. We'll have all those links below and if you are on the newsletter already, you will get this question automatically. If you are not, you can subscribe below.

This will also put you on to the daily newsletter and you'll get all of the Flex4s that we've done so far. My goal with this is to make the action items very explicit over a very short period of time and all in one place. So if you only want the doing portion, this would be your one stop shop for that.

So go to miketnellson.com forward slash flex for enjoy the podcast here with Brandon Day all about the concept of flow.

[00:05:14] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Welcome back to the Flex Diet Podcast. Thank you so much for being on here, Brandon. I appreciate it.

[00:05:20] **Brandon Day:** Yeah, thanks Dr. Mike. Thanks for

[00:05:21] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** having me. Yeah, one of the topics we're going to talk about today, which we haven't talked about a whole lot is The concept of low states. So what definition for people who are new, who my biased opinion is, I think the concepts and the ideas of flow state are absolutely fascinating, but I also feel like the term has been bastardized to hell and back because it's trendy and everybody wants to say, everything's a flow state now.

So what do you have as a kind of a definition of a flow state before we get into it?

[00:05:56] **Brandon Day:** Yeah, I like that. That intro there the flow state, the technical definition is pretty, it's vague. It's basically, an altered state of consciousness where we feel our best and perform our best.

Okay. More, more specifically, we could call it like any time where you have this totally total absorption, excuse me, in the task at hand, like rapt attention, so much so that time starts to go away. That the task feels effortless, like one action flows seamlessly to another, right? You also have this paradox of control where you may be doing something you have never even attempted before, but you feel totally in control of yourself, right?

So you're right. It's been called by all sorts of different things, throughout time. And even now it's, it gets thrown around. It's almost like the word trauma. Yeah,

[00:06:51] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** that's the other word that's starting to bug me. Now

[00:06:55] **Brandon Day:** you get this like concept creep where it just it starts to spread out into everything and they just call it everything flow or like everything that's ever happened to you is.

Trauma, right? So it definitely does get that, but there are some very specific characterizations that you can say, okay, yeah, that's definitely a flow state and the top I think there's six big characteristics that the godfather of flow research or flow psychology, his name was Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, a Hungarian guy that ended up at the university

[00:07:30] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** of Chicago for many years.

And his name is almost like self prophesizing what he's gonna talk about, which I find hilarious too if you do the poor English translation of it. Yeah, what is it? I've never

[00:07:42] **Brandon Day:** even

[00:07:43] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** No, I'm just saying it sounds like, sent me high. It sounds to me like, because I'm not very good with foreign languages, it's like, Oh, you're kinda high, like you're in a flow state.

Oh, it's like the perfect last name, even though it has nothing to do with that.

[00:07:58] **Brandon Day:** Yeah, that's awesome. I never thought about it like that. But he discovered those essentially six main characteristics of a flow state. One being that time dilation where time tends to speed up. An hour goes by in a flash, right?

Or on the other hand, it can actually slow way down to where you get this like Almost like a freeze frame effect. If you've ever been in like a car accident, where it's just like every moment you use, it was like, it's a frame by frame. Exactly. Yeah. So that time dilation is a big characteristic of a flow state that effortlessness is another one where you just, you're just on top of your game.

Everything's going right. You can't screw anything up. The richness of the experience, it tends to get so much salience. And sensory information that it just feels like like everything's a little bit brighter, right? You can hear more acutely. It's almost like you, you have these spidey senses in a way where everything's heightened.

And then you get this like selflessness too, where action and awareness start to merge. And this is where you get that feeling of like oneness, like a surfer who feels like one with the wave. or a musician who's one with their instrument, right? There's no separation between our body and, the action of what we're doing.

So those are key characteristics that are gonna show up in a flow state. So if you don't have those, you call it what you want, but it's probably not. And an actual flow state. And, they've done a ton of research on this now with all the neuroscience research has been going on in the past, say 20 years since, well, I

guess about 30 years now since FMRI, it came into the fray and they can really see what's happening in the brain.

And there are a lot of really cool, changes that are actually happening in the brain, which make it really an altered state of consciousness. This is a separate state. From our regular waking consciousness that they've very accurately measured. So, is that a pretty good definition?

[00:10:16] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah. Yeah. What, what would be some of the changes in brain state that they've seen? My first thought is. Is it similar to some of like the psychedelic research where you see changes in the default mode network or are we looking at just different areas of the brain become more active like I think I've heard, I don't know which is correct, but I've heard both the frontal lobe becomes more active and less active and it's what are some of the different differences there?

[00:10:42] **Brandon Day:** Yeah, great question. So first I should explain that flow happens in a cycle. So there's, and there's four essentially stages that we go through, right? Because it's not really a good idea to spend all your life in flow. In fact, if somebody tells you that they live in flow states, You should probably be wary.

They may be

[00:11:04] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** on my list of BS detection. That's number one. Like I'm always in a flow state. I'm like, Nope, not listening to this dude or gal. Right? Yeah.

[00:11:13] **Brandon Day:** Yeah. We might actually call that like a mental illness. Yeah.

[00:11:17] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah. There's something off. Yeah. That's

[00:11:19] **Brandon Day:** If you're stuck in a flow state, that's, we would call that like mania.

Right. That's a manic state that you, they wouldn't be good because it's an extremely energy demanding state. Right. So, so we need recovery from that. And that's like the final stages we got to recover, right. Just like a training bout, we need to warm up and flow. We call this first stage of struggle phase.

Because it's we're really like amping up all of our our stress systems, like cortisol, adrenaline, like norepinephrine, these things are starting to amp up and we're, say we're attacking a problem. We got to gather the information, we got to get everything ready, we got to hold it all in our brain and get all of these stress chemicals up.

To the point where we start to get like frustration, right? And depending on your activity, this may happen more or less, but you actually get to a point where you have to essentially trigger a fight or flight response, right? Think of a

[00:12:23] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** lot of sympathetic side of the equation to simplify

[00:12:26] **Brandon Day:** it. Yeah, just, yeah, that's a great, that's a great way to simplify it.

We need to ramp up sympathetics. A lot right in order to prepare and then we actually get a small moment can be a moment or, can spread out for a long period of time where we actually release, we let go of the problem and we shift from like high beta wave brain states, and we start to shift into more alpha.

To bring it back down. This alpha is like our longer, slower waves, almost like a daydreaming kind of state.

[00:13:00] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** What'd you say? Like a pseudo meditation ish, like you're not completely out, but you're still thoughts are still rolling by. And I'd say. Meditation state for most people like myself who are not among practicing meditation 10 hours a day Yeah, we might call it like a light meditative state.

Yeah.

[00:13:18] **Brandon Day:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, so That release is really important to to switch networks from that executive network Into more of the salience and even into the default mode network for a time to let things You Simmer in a way. Say, we're attacking some really hard problem. We got all these things that we're trying to hold in our head.

We're really narrowly focused. That beta wave state, that high executive function, high frontal lobe activity. That's that struggle phase. Then we let it go in the release and we let our unconscious mind take over. And it's going to make

these lateral connections and all this stuff through that default mode network and spread things out a bit.

And then when we come back, and it's can be in moments, right? We come back, we drop right into flow. And we see more of the alpha brainwave, alpha and theta brainwave states in a flow state. And you actually do get that, what's called transient hypofrontality.

[00:14:23] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah, Steven Kotler's talked a lot about that.

[00:14:25] **Brandon Day:** Yeah, so the original researcher this guy named Arne Dietrich, And he discovered this weird sensation where when you were in a flow state this also happens quite often in exercise. Exercise is one of the best ways to find this to find flow, number one, but also to find this state of transient hypofrontality, meaning transient, meaning for a short period of time.

Hypo being the opposite of hyper. So meaning less than and frontality frontal lobe activation. So short lived frontal lobe shutting down essentially. So, and that's where, you're self rumination, you're self critic, you're self doubt. All this self reflection, the thinking brain that's always, second guessing our actions and making sure we're safe and inhibiting things like that kind of shuts down in the flow state, which allows us to really take more risks, yes, But also not be inhibited and not second guess ourselves and just go with that.

And in a way trust ourselves a little bit more to do what needs to be done. So that flow state is when it really kicks into high gear and The the frontal lobe shuts down, but like the cerebellum, these back parts of the brain really amp up, they take those resources and they just roll with

[00:15:51] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** them.

They're more movement orientated stuff for lack of a better word.

[00:15:56] **Brandon Day:** Yeah. So the cerebellum is, like its main functions are accuracy, balance, coordination of movement. But also inhibition. Of unwanted movements or even unwanted thoughts and these type of things, emotional regulation actually happens in the cerebellum as well.

So when we shut down this frontal lobe and then take all those resources back there, a lot of that movement that's stored back there is like procedural type memory, so It's things we're already really skilled at, right? And so they become like automatic. And that's where this like effortless comes in because we

just, we've done these things many times so they become automatic and we just flow through them without having to second guess or think about it.

And it's a really incredibly enjoyable experience because of just this massive neurochemical cocktail. That happens in the brain, like this increase in norepinephrine and dopamine, you know, that just drives our attention and focus into the moments, right, and just really latches us on to the task at hand.

But then you also get these other endorphins and endocannabinoids like anandamide, which doesn't show up very often, but it shows up in exercise and in flow states. And it's um, Ananda, the first part of that word is actually a Sanskrit word that means bliss. So this is known as the bliss molecule and, beyond the like pain relief and other stuff that, the endorphins and these endocannabinoids can do, like it just gives you this bliss.

Overall sense of like euphoria and like it's a really good

[00:17:37] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** molecule of the runner's high People used to think it was orphans and it's actually an end of mind release primarily Exactly right. Yeah.

[00:17:45] **Brandon Day:** So that along with, a little serotonin juice, showing up in there and all these other neurochemicals make it like one of the most enjoyable experiences that we can have as humans endogenously, right?

Most people are out there seeking this from exogenous substances. Like psychedelics or others. And psychedelics, they actually have a really similar looking profile and the neurochemicals that show up and the brain networks and everything. Very similar to a flow state with some with some small differences, key differences, but the main thing is like the, well, number one, the risk.

And the how do you say it? Like the control, I guess might be a way to say it. Like the, anytime you're using an exogenous substance. You're hijacking your own system in a way, and they can be, they have their place and, I'm a big believer in like plant medicine and therapeutic uses of those substances.

But I would much rather find that it from my own experience and endogenously right from something that I'm curious about in a way that, my body and my brain are built. To seek out.

[00:18:59] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** So, and in my experience, I would not call five glasses of ayahuasca a flow experience by any stretch of the imagination.

Yeah. Maybe a little bit, but overall no, it's just a different thing altogether.
Yeah,

[00:19:16] **Brandon Day:** it certainly is. And when you're getting up to that level, at a high dose, yeah. Low

[00:19:20] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** doses

[00:19:20] **Brandon Day:** are different. Well beyond, what a normal flow state is, but, flow does sit on a spectrum and we can have a micro flow state.

Like you just batch all your emails at the end of the day, put on some good music, boom, you can drop into flow and that, hour can go by in five minutes, right? What was supposed to be a three word response turns into three paragraphs and you're just like, you're Ernest Hemingway, just clicking away on those keys that can be a flow state right there.

And that's. That's a lot of what I coach people in is like, how do we find flow in areas outside of those high flow activities that you're already pretty prone to find flow? Most of us have one of those and they fall in our hobbies or in our sports or whatever we do for fun. And those are usually bigger flow states, but we can have them all the way down from that micro up to bigger, and like a macro huge flow state is essentially like a.

A mystical experience and you mentioned Steven Kotler and like I'm a huge fan of his

[00:20:23] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Rise of Superman is a great book. It's older now, but I think when he put that book out, that was well ahead of his time.

[00:20:30] **Brandon Day:** Yeah, I believe it was 2012 or 2013 when that book came out and it was one of the first of its kind, especially adding in the neuroscience of it because everything before was, she sent me high and it was all based in positive psychology and really great work that pioneered it.

And Collar kind of took the torch, but the, I forgot why I brought him up.

[00:20:57] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Well, one of the questions related to that, and you'll think of your other comment, but Is one of his things was because of like action sports or people doing these huge gap jumps and parachuting and mountain biking and all the crazy extreme sports that were exploding at that point.

I think his main argument was that this is the perfect playground to study flow because it has all the components and it has the high risk component of like even for me, like just doing smaller jumps, kiteboarding, doing 20 feet in the air, like you don't really want to check out like a 20 feet up in the air.

Or if you're doing a steep drop on a snowboard or mountain bike or whatever, like it is not good. So I think one of his arguments was because these sports almost set up all these components perfectly and the fact that these people, guys and gals are professionals doing it.

And that the consequence of screwing it up is so high. That it becomes like this perfect kind of playground to look at all these things.

[00:21:58] **Brandon Day:** Yeah, that's exactly right. Yeah. And he initially wasn't even looking at Flo. He was just, following around Action Adventure Sport Athletes because nobody else at The magazine, whatever, wanted to do it, right?

Yeah. He was into those sports and liked those people, so he did that and he noticed that something was going on that was strange here because they were, exponentially increasing their results and everything and, eventually, yes, that's exactly right. He found that this was just a playground that was totally rich in, in what they call flow triggers.

It was just chocked full of them. And one of them being risk is a hugely potent flow trigger. And it makes sense, evolutionarily, like when the risk goes up, we need to focus, right? We got to survive this. So flow actually is a evolutionarily adaptive state for the human being in order to evolve and to survive in those action adventure sports, like the more risk, the more focus you get, we call it getting focus for free, right?

So you ramp up those neurochemicals because you got to really pay attention. That sympathetic state goes to 10 immediately. We talk about fight or flight. You got to fight. Right. You got to attack the mountain. You have to attack the wave, right? You can't go in all willy nilly and just no, we'll give it a shot.

A really good way to get very hurt or worse, right? So yeah, you gotta have that mentality that fight response and that's what you know takes you past the struggle and straight into flow So that's the other draw with some of those sports. It's like that struggle phase is very small.

It's you approaching the mountain and in an instant You're dropping it and you're going to go into flow. So a lot of reasons why the, those kinds of sports were just right for flow. The unfortunate thing, and there is a dark side to flow is that. When you continually chase triggers like risk, the eventual end to that is, is usually not good.

[00:24:16] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah, all those people have, like Travis Pastrana listing the amount of injuries he's had and I think he's broken almost every bone in his body and just, and he's but, It's the cost of doing it. He's yeah, it's the game. I'm like, poof.

[00:24:31] **Brandon Day:** And how lucky has he been? Oh,

[00:24:35] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** a hundred percent.

Like he's had so many accidents that he could have died, like what she will fully admit himself.

[00:24:40] **Brandon Day:** Yeah. And it's.

It's all too common to see, really high level athletes in those action adventure sports end up passing in, in these accidents and it's You know, on the one hand they're pushing the limits of their sport and their body and their brain and everything else. And that's, that can be commendable.

Right. But on the other hand, it's is that really necessary for a life? Well lived, is there another way that we can find flow, which is the state that they're really seeking, it's not, most of these people are out there for the records or a lot of them

[00:25:23] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** don't even compete.

Formally, some do, but yeah. That's

[00:25:27] **Brandon Day:** exactly right. Most of the time, these people are dying out there on their own, or maybe with a friend, just doing the thing that they love. Like they don't care about the external rewards. Right. And this is the difference and why flow is so powerful because it's stacking what are called intrinsic motivators or intrinsic drivers, like our basic biological drives.

Right, to seek out curiosity, to follow our passions, the things that we love to do, and there, there was called autotelic in nature, meaning that you would do it

or it is an end in itself, I think is the kind of the definition of that word, but it means you do it without any care for money, fame, or any other external reward.

You would do it just for the sake of doing it, because you love to do it. Right. And most of these people are doing exactly that. And they're seeking flow states. We used to call them adrenaline junkies, but they're not a better term is flow junkie, right? They're seeking the flow state, but they just. Here's a perfect example.

I've been working with a new client for a couple of months now. And he he's a wild guy. Like he's a paramedic helicopter pilot a sea captain, a merchant Marine captain. And he is a former professional skier. He just sailed his sailboat solo from Vancouver Island around to the Caribbean and Antigua 8, 000 mile trip.

Just. So just cause wanted to go out and have a sale, and this is how he lives his life. It's like everything is, it's always the next adventure. What's next? Let's go, let's keep rolling. And he's one of, one of three helicopter pilots. In the world who can fly into these certain areas that have a margin of error on the landing pad, think like way up in the mountains in weather like rescue missions where they're landing margin of error is centimeters.

He's one of three in the world and you can imagine the amount of focus. Yeah, precision and intense attention that he has to pay in these times, like ripe for flow. And when I first talked to this guy, he's oh yeah, I know exactly what you're talking about. Everything you're saying, makes perfect sense.

The issue for him is his relationships are starting to suffer. He is always seeking the next high. Right? He's always searching for that next flow state, and if he doesn't have access to it, if today I'm not working, or I don't get to sail because, the engine's out, I can't get it out of the marina, whatever, I don't have access to this, then he'll, he would, in the past, seek it through some kind of other substance.

And along with all of those, crazy experiences in a helicopter comes a little like PTSD, there's some other things that kind of come along with living a high risk lifestyle like that. So long story short, we started working together and, the main deal for me, and this is where the applied neurology comes in that you and I talked about a little bit before we jumped on here.

Because we gotta get his brain, back to a low, back to a state where it's not constantly under threat. And the only time he feels like he can, get out of that threat is when he's in flow. And so there's this big discrepancy between just normal life, where he's like in pain, and his system's constantly under threat because his brain function and all of the injuries that he's had are constantly telling his brain we just don't even feel safe.

Just walking around the world, but then when he gets into flow all of those neurochemicals They just there is no more threat because when you're in a like state of live or die Which those high risk scenarios definitely are for him your brain no longer cares about that ankle injury from 10 years ago

[00:29:39] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Yeah, it's got other priorities to deal with

[00:29:43] **Brandon Day:** It doesn't care if you break your ankle right now.

It's going to say, you know what, that pain can wait. We need to survive this situation first. And so flow is going to take over those endorphins and anandamide is going to say, nope, that pain is not worth it right now to pay attention to. So we're just going to tune down that signal. We're going to drive flow to get you out of this situation, but just be aware that when you're at home later, that's going to hurt a lot.

That's going to come back, right? So, so for a guy like that, which is, this is a lot of the, a lot of the clients that I see are this kind of really high performing risk takers, the flow junkies that, that are at a point where they've seen a lot of success, whether in business or in sport or whatever, but they're dealing, in their normal life, they're dealing with a lot of pain, whether that's psychological, like anxiety, depression, PTSD, or most often it's very physical, the chronic pains that they've been ignoring for years that are just adding so much threat to the system that the brain is just bro, I don't know what to do with you.

Let's just go find flow. Right. Cause that's when we feel the best.

[00:31:00] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Well, it's a brain's going to force you into the only solution. If you don't have a tool bag or other solutions that are maybe Lower cost, lower threat. It's Oh, Hey let's go do this again. Cause that solved all of our problems last time.

[00:31:14] **Brandon Day:** That's exactly right. Yeah. Perfectly said. And they end up relying on like the one trigger that they know is going to help. It's going to get them into flow every time. And that's a risk. So then they're just

continually chasing that dragon trying to find the risk. Because as said principle, right.

Specific adaptation to impose demands are we're our brain, our body, we're going to adapt to whatever we do all the time. Right. So if you are constantly putting yourself in risky scenarios all the time, eventually that same level of risk doesn't become, doesn't give you the same reward. And you've got to keep pushing it.

Right. That's where it can become addictive in a sense. And flow can be very addictive. Right? In a positive way or a negative way. It's just based on the context and how productive we can make it. Video games, high flow activity.

[00:32:14] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Very high flow activity. That's why I don't allow myself to play video games.

It's not because I have anything against them or think they're evil or Because you love them. think they're bad. That I have an addictive personality and I know that the games are just too damn good. I would get nothing done and it wouldn't be good.

[00:32:34] **Brandon Day:** Yep. I'm the same way. I used to play when I was younger, but I just can't even have them in the house anymore cause it's just ah, they're just too fun.

They'll just suck me right in. Cause they're chock full of flow triggers, like Yeah,

[00:32:47] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** that's their job as a game designer. They want you to play the game for as long as possible. I can't remember who said this, but He said that he'll allow his kids to play an older game, like an older Nintendo game that you have to purchase on like a cartridge.

That there's no online component, but he will not allow them to play free online games on their iPad. Because he said those are even more engineered to get you to stay longer because they want you to pay. Their whole goal is to get you to pay where the other thing, yeah, maybe the technology was good, then the gameplay is good, but it's a fixed thing, you already purchased it, they don't really care if you finish, you play the game, you don't play the game, whatever.

Yeah, they want you to finish it by the next one, but is that it's not nearly as addictive as the new kind of online versions, especially if they're free, where their whole goal is just to get money from you.

[00:33:40] **Brandon Day:** Yeah, and they're engineered very well to do that and they're playing on the same triggers You know that we're talking about.

Social media is the same thing. Yeah, it's all playing on that like that dopamine system, right? Trying to capture your attention Which is why it's so hard for many people these days to find flow and why so many people You know, you and I have a really good understanding already of it and we have high flow activities Cause we've probably grown up doing that.

And part of my story is I lost access to flow because when I got done playing college football, I didn't have a backup high flow activity and I just stopped basically playing sports altogether and went into making movies and then moved to LA and was just all in on that, but I lost access to that.

And I didn't know, why I was so depressed, why, like I was, abusing substances and, I had some PTSD going on and all of these mental health issues, I didn't understand that it was just at a basic level, it was access to flow that I was missing. And I like, this is why I'm so passionate about it because.

That was such a light bulb for me. And I realized that a lot of people don't have that regular access to it to begin with. And that's, to me, it's just terrible. It's a terrible way to go through life, not having access to this, like innate superpower, number one, to do amazing things, but also just this.

This like pharmacy in your brain that just can make you feel so good and get you out of these like negative states with just a simple switch, that is driven by our own innate biology. For, to seek out, things that we are curious about, right? And that's really just all it has to start as find some curiosities, chase them down, and then play with the triggers a little bit, and you can find yourself and flow.

So, that's been my mission, is like, helping people, number one, find that if you've never really experienced it, and just find it more consistently, and know that you can get there if you can set up your environment and know what you're looking for and like the biggest thing, like here's the golden rule of flow states.

So anything you're doing, whether that be a high flow activity like a sport or some kind of movement practice. Or even, all the way down to like our most

menial maintenance activities, like folding our laundry or doing the dishes, writing emails. Yeah. The golden rule of the flow, and this can help people find more flow than any other of the triggers, of which there's 20, 25, we're finding more all the time.

But this one is probably the biggest one. It's called the challenge skills balance. So very simply, it's pushing yourself outside of your comfort zone. Aim for 1%, 1 to 4%. That's like the golden rule there. And if we put it on a graph, like on this x axis here, we've got the challenge of the activity. Right.

How hard is it? How difficult? On the other side, on the y axis, we've got your skill level. Your current skill level, where you're at. Flow sits right in the middle, where challenge and skills meet. If we've got something that's too challenging, for our current skill level, we're going to find anxiety. It's going to be just too much, a little out of reach, right?

We're not going to find flow there. It's going to be too hard. On the other hand, if it's too, if it's not enough challenge for our current skill level, then we're just going to get bored. Think about doing the dishes boring, right? We really don't want to do it. Cause it's not challenging, right? There's nothing, whatever we're thinking about something else, right?

Ruminating on the past. You're getting anxious about the future. That's not being in the moment, right, and flow is all about being in the deep now, right, as it's sometimes called. So, if we can increase the challenge of whatever task we're doing to match our skill level, we can find flow in there and we can make that an enjoyable experience.

For the dishes example, we want to follow that one up. You can time yourself, give yourself some constraints. Right? Only do it with your non dominant hand. Or I'm like a amateur musician, so I like to sing. So I'll do some humming or singing while I'm doing my dishes. Or neurodrills.

I'll throw in some neurodrills. Maybe some vision drills while I'm doing dishes. So it's keeping me occupied and I'm doing the dishes at the same time. You can get lost in the moment, which is what we're looking for. That's a micro flow state right there. So there's a million different ways that we can toy with this challenge skills balance and just tune the dials a little bit so that our brain is like more engaged.

And we can find that flow state. And the cool thing is like flow begets flow. So the more flow we find, the more time we spend in the present moment, the more

likely we're going to find it in other areas. Right? So our brain is a pattern recognition machine. So it's always going to be seeking out, how can I find this in all the other areas of my life?

So then it becomes self fulfilling prophecy and we start to live that high flow lifestyle. And that's, just my opinion at this point, but I think this is a really therapeutic tool that we can use to get rid of a lot of the garbage mental health issues that we've been dealing with, that have a stuck in the future or reliving the past all the time, right? What's the cure for that live in the present moment, right? Easier said than done. But if we can find a way to find flow, it takes care of itself. So

[00:39:44] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** I agree. And what are your thoughts about, so my bias is for people who are very unfamiliar with these things to, to start on the higher end, right?

I can make any, I can make any discussion, talk about why people should learn to kiteboard. But. Learn any type of recreation. You could even apply this to weightlifting if you want. Yeah. Learn a new skill, spend your money on the best instructor you can find who can properly grade you with great exposure.

Here's these cues, trying to set you up for success, not having you do things that are. Too hard, or you're bored, and they're too easy because there is some risk, there's a lot of novelty, you haven't done it before, and I think once you experience flow in those states, it's a little bit easier, and then you know what it's like, and you have that one thing you can look for.

And then go backwards from there. It's like with breathing techniques. Like I've taught some breath work for quite a while. I'm not the best at teaching it, but the thing I thought most profound, like by the Wim Hof or the TUMO super ventilation method was, Oh, in five minutes, you can have people feeling absolutely spacey from breath work.

That may not be the goal all the time. There's definitely a downside to doing that. However, for me, it was incredibly powerful to show people that yeah, breath work can dramatically alter your state. Or if you do the zen style go stare at a tree for an hour Yeah, I don't know. It was cool. Like I don't know if I feel that different there's not that profound sense of Oh, I get it.

So i'm gonna go further down this path. Yeah.

[00:41:27] **Brandon Day:** Yeah, and You nailed it. Like when I'm starting with somebody, or if I was just doing like a drive by, somebody was just asking me, what do I do? Yes. Find a high flow activity and the best place to look are the things that you're curious about. So I'll often have people just write down, just make a list, like a running list of all the things that you're curious about anything works right now, you start to find where those curiosities crossover and that's where you start to find passion and you start to go down that, that road and you can really find, purpose and follow that we're stacking intrinsic drivers when we do this, but to find a high flow activity.

A couple things to look for. If it's movement based, it's gonna be easier to find flow because one of the top flow triggers is deep embodiment. The more we can be inside our body right, and moving our body which is why breath work is awesome but also. Any kind of movement based activity is going to be more ripe for flow and that exercise induced transient hypofrontality kind of works in here.

Exercise is the best way to get that mind to quiet down. And to get us in the flow. Another thing that you mentioned that's really important is having a coach or at least someone that can help you with some feedback on whether or not you're doing it correctly, how to improve, whatever. A lot of times we're going to find that in some of our movement based things or like sports, for example, say you're playing basketball, you either make the shot or you don't

[00:43:07] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** have immediate feedback,

[00:43:09] **Brandon Day:** pretty good feedback right there.

But but it's also really helpful to have a coach to point out and to cue in order to increase your skill level, right? And they can play with that challenge better than you can on your own because they've got more experience and they know where to poke. So that immediate feedback, the deep embodiment, those are really important.

The challenge skills balance also really important. So if you find an activity and say you're a total beginner at it, that's fine, right? Find a level where you can find some, Now I'm trying to use a different word, like some smoothness to it, right? And one thing that I'll do for myself when I'm trying something new or with a client, when I'm teaching them something new, as I will try to help them find some rhythm in anything that they're doing.

Like I'll break a movement down into its component pieces and we'll build it from the ground up. Very methodically, but that's not going to help them find flow. What's going to help them find flow is to integrate it together and to find some smoothness of that movement. And rhythm is a really good way to help them do that.

Set a metronome and have them practice a movement, right? To the metronome. This is why music is so ripe for flow and why dancing is one of the top high flow activities for anyone to do. Cause it's

[00:44:36] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** ripe with flow triggers. Does that include mosh pits or just dancing?

[00:44:41] **Brandon Day:** Heck yes One of my favorite dancing activities But remember back in the beginning of this conversation we were talking about The transient hypofrontality and how a lot of those resources go to the back of the brain and like the cerebellum specifically and the cerebellum remember does like Accuracy, balance and coordination and a big component to help drive activation to the cerebellum is rhythm, right?

So if we can get some rhythm going, then we're going to drive more activation there. That's going to help us get out of this front brain into the back brain and drive us into flow. So yeah, rhythm is a really powerful flow trigger. So you can find something where you're moving your body, something where you've got immediate feedback.

Where the challenge is just beyond your current skill level. If you can find some rhythm in that, you're going to be, you're gonna be well on your way to finding flow in that activity, whatever it is. And even better if you can do it with other people, right? The social aspect. The flow is really powerful and there's a whole nother concept called group flow that, that could be a whole nother conversation.

That's incredibly powerful. As far as, enjoyment and social bonding and this, I don't know if you've ever heard the term collective effervescence, really powerful thing that most of us have experienced if we've ever been to a concert. If we go to church, right, these are built around this concept of group flow and this coming together and synchronizing of, all of these separate beings and energies coming together.

So, so really cool stuff. But if I was, trying to help someone just starting out with flow states, that's what I would do is find a high flow activity. And it's

something that you are curious about or that you already really enjoy. Okay. Right. And if you can find that one, then that you can use as, and that should not be something you're paid to do.

I'll lay that out there. It should be something that's totally free your own choice, keep your high flow activities separate from your work. Because you need one that's more respite, like more time spent for you and only you, right? It's good to keep those separate. It's great to find flow in your work.

And that's. To me, that's like incredibly important thing to do in life, but you want to have that other one too. Right. So, so, go out there and find something that you're really curious about, something that you'd love to do that you would do just for the sake of doing it. And play with those triggers and see if you can't find yourself at the end of two hours being like, huh?

Wow, that went by fast. I feel really good. That's all it is, right? And the more we do that The more we'll start to feel that in other areas and it starts to spill over. So,

[00:47:46] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** yeah, the thing about rhythm and timing, I think is so key because I didn't even notice this, like just lifting here is certain.

I can only listen to certain music. It's mostly just very loud death metal, but even within that I love Gojira. I love Mastodon. I love those bands are probably one of my top two favorite bands of all time. And Meshuggah is another one, but, oh my god there's so many time signatures, there's so much shit going on that I can't lift to them because I think there isn't that sense of rhythm.

Again, not all their songs are like that. But if I put on something like, a helmet for an example, which is very almost classical, like just duh, like very rhythmic type music, I find that's a lot easier too, which I thought was interesting.

[00:48:31] **Brandon Day:** Yeah, so one recommendation I could give to you is Use that rhythmic music more in like your warmups.

You do neuro drills and stuff as you warm up, right. Try to find some rhythm in there and that'll at least get you into the mode, drop you into flow. And then you can turn on Meshuggah, like when you're ready for your max lift. When you need it, cause it's going to give you a little boost too.

Oh yeah. Yeah. Right. That's real. I'm a big Slipknot fan but I will throw that on, when it's time to go, Cause I know it's going to drop me into an even deeper

mode, like that fight mode. Right. But when I'm doing a regular movement practice or something, yeah, for me, it's more like EDM, like I'll listen to some house music because it's always 140 beats per minute and it's very predictable and my brain likes that.

And so I'll be able to find flow in the movement. Part of it a little bit better, but again when it's time to rock like it's time to go, you know So i'll throw that on but can be helpful

[00:49:42] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** cool where can people find more about you? Tell us where they can get the the six essential things and if people want to work with you, give us all the info.

[00:49:51] **Brandon Day:** Yeah, so if you want to download the six non negotiables, that little cheat sheet, you can go to neuroflowcoaching. com. It's right there. Super easy to download that. You can also follow me on Instagram at neuroflowcoaching. Or hit me up on Facebook. I'm Brandon Day. That's my personal page. And yeah, those are the three big places where I'm at mostly.

[00:50:13] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Awesome. Yeah, we'll definitely put all those in the notes today. Man. Thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate it. I know you have to run off and teach and I got to run off here, but yeah, I really appreciate it. This was a good conversation and some fun stuff. I think people can definitely check out.

[00:50:28] **Brandon Day:** Yeah, I really enjoyed this. Thank you for having me.

[00:50:30] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Thank you. Appreciate it.

[00:50:32] **Brandon Day:** All right.

[00:50:34] **Dr Mike T Nelson:** Thank you so much for listening to the podcast. Really appreciate it. Huge thanks to Brandon for all of his time here. We'll put links to everything he's doing, including some programs that he has down below.

Note, I am not affiliate for any of the programs. I do not make any money off of them, but I wanted to help highlight some of the great work that he's doing. So if you are interested in checking those out, please go to the links below. If you

want to know his top four items of how to get into flow in about five minutes or less, please Go to MikeTenNelson.

com forward slash flex four F L E X, the number four, and you'll be able to get those. And that will also put you onto the daily newsletter where we have a lot more information right now, probably 90 plus percent of my content goes out to the newsletter first. Good portion of it only goes to the newsletter and doesn't show up anywhere else.

And it's free. So check that out there. If you want interested in Tecton, which is a tasty exogenous ketone beverage for increases in performance. And I especially like it for a cognitive function, especially if I've been a little bit tired or sleep's been off with travel and everything else check out the link below and you can use the code Dr.

Mike to save 20 percent a side note. I am a scientific advisor there and I am an ambassador. So I do make some. money off of the link but it's something that I've been using a fair amount and really and think that it definitely does have a place. So check it out. Any questions on that? Hit me up.

And the last part is the Flex Diet Cert will open again, June 17th, 2024. Go to flexdiet. com if you're looking for your complete one stop for all things nutrition, recovery, and performance related. This would be your ticket. Again, we're primarily focusing more on the nutrition side. Proteins, fats, carbohydrates.

But we do also include sleep, micronutrients, basic exercise, walking. Because all of those things are going to impact your ability to make changes in the body composition and performance. So our goal here, if I steal a line from my friend Juliette Sturette, is to unconfuse or deconfuse people. I think the world of nutrition is very confusing, and my goal with this was, yeah, it is based on some of my bias with metabolic flexibility and flexible dieting, but to make it based on the literature as much as possible in addition to the, God, almost going on, crap, 20 years now, I spent looking at this stuff and working with clients, wanted to distill it down into a complete system that you can then learn, and then more importantly, you can apply.

So it is very keen on the applied knowledge side of the equation. To actually tell you how to use all of the information in the complete system also. So if you have any questions on that, hit me up. Go to flexdiet. com to get on to the waitlist and the newsletter for that. Thank you so much for listening to this podcast.

Really appreciate it. If you find someone who may enjoy this episode, please forward it to them. You do all the wonderful things to help us with the old algorithm, like it, share it, all that good stuff really helps us get into more different ear holes with the podcast. Thank you so much. Really appreciate it.

Have a wonderful day.

Well, they say all good things come to an end. What's that got to do with this show?

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