

4.2

DIRECTIONALITY AND FLOW

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Supplementary material for Integrating counselling and psychotherapy: Directionality, synergy, and social change (Sage, 2019).

Research suggests that the actualisation of our directions may be closely connected to the experience of flow. Flow has been defined as, 'the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 4). Think of a time, for instance, when you were writing an essay and everything just seemed to 'flow'; or playing a sport when it all felt effortless and natural. Flow has been described as an optimal state of experiencing, in which the person is engaged, concentrated and in harmony with the world, experiencing their activities as intrinsically rewarding (Jackson, 2012).

For Csikszentmihalyi (2002), the setting of goals is essential for this experience of flow, as it focuses people's attention, and engages them in their activity. Without clear goals, he suggests, the person may fall into a state of 'psychic entropy', in which attention is constantly diverted away from the things they are striving to achieve (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Consistent with this, in a state of flow, people describe a strong sense of knowing what it is that they are supposed to be doing, and experiencing moment-to-moment feedback on how they are progressing. Here, 'actions and goals become seamlessly intertwined' (Jackson, 2012, p. 129).

REFERENCES

- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2002). *Flow: The classic work on how to achieve happiness*. London: Rider.
- Jackson, S. (2012). Flow. In R. M. Ryan (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of human motivation* (pp. 127–140). New York: Oxford University Press.