Discover What Makes You Flow

2021 was supposed to be better, a light at the end of a dark tunnel, but it hasn't started off that way. Instead we are stuck, still waiting for life to get back to normal and our patience is being tested at every turn. Time feels like it has slowed down as we are forced to wait for things to happen that are out of our control.

We wait for the possibility to make a vaccination appointment, for our children to return to school full-time and to be able to hug our friends and family and then, of course, to get our hangovers cured. We are desperately waiting for life to return to normal.

Yes, Tom Petty, Waiting is the Hardest Part

Psychologist Professor Kate Sweeny recently wrote an essay exploring how stressful uncertainty, which is waiting for an unknown outcome outside of one's own control, can be an issue for people in crisis. She finds that long-term waiting can be a terrible experience. She also researches the mental and physical effects of people waiting. Among other groups she studied new school students waiting to see if they passed the bar exam and patients waiting to hear results of a cancer biopsy. Some wait months and some hours for answers that can either be life changing or simply minor bumps in the road. What she found is that in all cases, waiting periods have two things in common: uncertainty and loss of control, which help to explain why waiting can be so difficult.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic has no controllable end in sight, Professor Sweeny expanded her research to include 6,000 people in China to assess how they were feeling and coping with the pandemic. It is not surprising that the respondents who felt the most uncertain and had the least amount of control in regard to their risk of contracting the virus were the most anxious, depressed and lonely. They also reported more unhealthy behaviors such as binge drinking and unhealthy eating habits.

She suggests that time seems to slow down when we are worried about the future, making the waiting period feel excruciatingly long, increasing our anxiety and emotional distress along the way. But do not despair, finding your “flow” may just be the answer you are looking for.

Find Your Flow & Speed Up Time

The concept of flow was developed by American-Hungarian Psychologist, Mihaly Csikszentimikalyi. As a child during WWII, he witnessed how the war destroyed the lives of the soldiers and civilians around him. They lost jobs, homes, loved ones and as a result, many were unable to express happiness after the war was over. Professor Csikszentimikalyi wanted to find out what contributed to a life well lived and how we can be happy in our everyday lives. Through his research and interviews with Olympic athletes, famous composers, and CEOs, he discovered flow.

Flow refers to a state of being while performing an activity you love and being completely engaged in the task that you are essentially unaware of your surroundings. Your body and mind are in sync and you are in a positive mental state.

In his book, Csikszentmihalyi wrote: “Being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time, Action, movement, and thought follow involuntarily from the previous one, like playing piano. Your whole being is involved, and you are using your skills to the utmost.”

Discovering where you can achieve this state of mind, whether that’s through painting, hiking, creating art, practicing yoga, playing music or whatever it is that allows you to arrive, flow is the key to the positive state of mind the moment requires.

Making You Feel

The Paradox of Patience

McCall Center for Behavioral Health was been chosen by the Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services (DMHAS) to host a new FEMA funded position, created in response to the pandemic. The Covid-19 Assistance for Community Health (COACH) program helps individuals who have been affected by the pandemic.

McCall Care Managers Robert Reier and Robert Brannock connect with people with services such as grief counseling, substance use and mental health treatment, and unemployment benefits.

While helping clients find solutions, they also encourage to stay connected with friends and loved ones and to remember that asking for help is a courageous act. The effects of the pandemic can be overwhelming and living one day, one hour or one minute at a time can help reduce anxiety.

For more information on McCall's COACH Program, call or enroll Robert Reier at (860) 485-2056, robert.reier@mccallcenter.org or Robert Brannock at (860) 481-4203 robert.brannock@mccallcenter.org.

Did you Miss our WDBG Interview?

Click on the link to hear this month’s interview on WDBG-97.3 with Dale Jones and Robert Reier, COACH Care Manager at the McCall Center for Behavioral Health. Tune in on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 8:20 to hear us in real-time.