



covered bridge

SUMMER
+
FALL

2022

CROSSING
LEISURE + ADVENTURE
IN THE VAIL VALLEY



TOP TRAILS
for JUNIOR
ADVENTURERS

Easy Living
At Altitude

Hats Off
To Female Chefs

Eagle Rodeo
Then + Now

VAIL + MINTURN + EAGLE-VAIL + AVON + EDWARDS + EAGLE + GYPSUM

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A man with a beard, wearing an orange long-sleeved shirt and dark shorts, is running on a grassy hill. The background shows a sunset or sunrise with a warm, golden glow over a range of hills. The man is in the center of the frame, running towards the viewer.

Tapping Outdoor Flow to Optimize Indoor Work

BY CLARE HEFFERREN

The temptation to be outdoors never ends, yet indoor work is required. While you may not control your work environment, being intentional with outdoor time provides an extra “gas tank” to fuel focus and productivity. Knowing how flow works at a neurobiological level gives us this choice.

What Is Flow?

Flow is a neurological cocktail of five chemicals resulting in enhanced performance, accelerated learning, amped creativity and pattern recognition. “It’s an optimal state of consciousness where we feel our best and perform our best. From a quality-of-life perspective, psychologists have found that the people who have the most flow in their lives are the happiest,” says Steven Kotler, a leading expert on human performance.

THE FOUR FLOW CYCLE COMPONENTS ALLOW US TO CONTINUOUSLY CULTIVATE FLOW.

1.

The **Struggle** is real.

Panting, angst and monkey brain is chemical build up. The torturous feeling typically lasts 20 minutes if you focus. If resisted, go back to jail and start again. Consciously use struggle and be rewarded as a springboard into flow.

2.

Release.

The release is a microsecond. We start calming down as a potent mix of reward neurochemicals; pleasure-inducing and performance-enhancing arrive, increasing everything from muscle reaction times to attention and pattern recognition.

3.

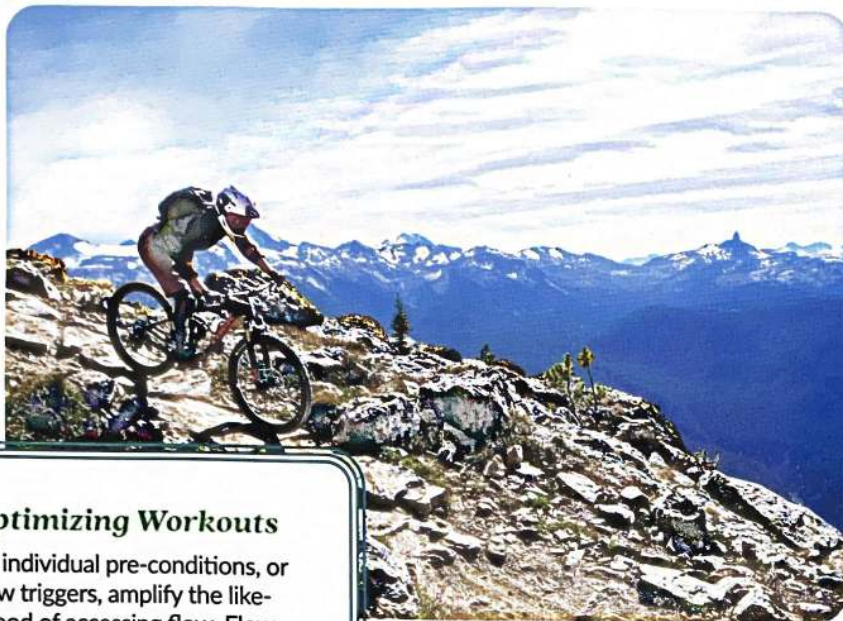
Flow.

You are one with the road, the dirt, the water. Time dissipates. The self disappears. Our heart rate slows and effortlessness soars.

4.

Recovery.

Flow is exhaustive, and so we must replenish our body and brain. Active recovery may include stretching, reading, sauna, infrared light, meditation or creative outlets.



Optimizing Workouts

12 individual pre-conditions, or flow triggers, amplify the likelihood of accessing flow. Flow triggers work by a combination of releasing chemicals and reducing cognitive load. Let's explore a few triggers for outdoor pursuits.

Complete concentration reduces cognitive load.

Flow follows focus. Mike Stepanek, a Shimano North America regional sales manager and single dad, swims early morning laps. "When swimming, I'm in a hypnotic trance of visual and audio. When you can find that place, I want to bottle that — every day, all day," he shares.

As risk goes up, flow becomes useful. Action and awareness merge and performance increases substantially. Heather Pugh, an EMT for Eagle County Paramedics, has an unpredictable work environment and relies on the outdoors to reset and reduce anxiety. The crew is on for 48 hours with palpable energy. "As I clock out, a post-shift run gets the crazies out. This time takes buzzing stress back down to earth," she says.

Novelty says when something is different we pay attention. Hit a new trail to drive yourself into flow.

Complexity occurs when information comes at us, and our brains sort through it.

Corrie Crane, property manager at East West Hospitality and enduro runner, plans runs near running water to absorb its release of negative ions in the air for a serotonin boost.

Unpredictability dictates that when we don't know what's next, we pay attention.

Stepanek thrives on a full schedule. "Ultimately the outdoor time is necessary to maintain the three balls I juggle — work, working out and kids. The better I can check off both lists, the better I am," he believes.

Deep embodiment is being connected to our bodies and senses to decrease cognitive load.

Crane shares, "I talk to so many people at work that I want to get lost in the woods to listen to my heartbeat and the birdsong."

Clear goals reduce cognitive load and drive focus.

With goals, our brains don't wonder what we should be doing. Crane gives herself permission to get outdoors. "I manifest what I want in my day for productivity, which includes work and a personal workout," she adds.

Immediate feedback gives us input on how we're doing.

Real-time course correction creates amplified possibility. Pugh knows, "When I'm in the Gore Range climbing over as many ridgelines as I can [an off-canted foot requires realignment and stokes the flow flame.]"

Challenge/skills ratio is a sweet spot between boredom and anxiety. Find new vertical terrain. Ride the berms. Look for the jump.



Peak Experience Recommendations

Tomorrow choose your discipline, time and location to build in flow triggers.

At sunrise, a 10K trail run through Beaver Creek provides unpredictability of footing, challenge/skills ratio of rolling vertical and deep embodiment as the rising sunlight breaks through the aspens. A lunchtime hike up Vail Mountain's Berry Picker provides clear goals as the Eagle Bahn Gondola is the destination. A sunset mountain bike ride on Avon Preserve's Saddle Ridge

requires complete concentration as you navigate the sagebrush to be rewarded with immediate feedback on Lee's Way sandy berms.



Bring Flow Indoors

As you increase outdoor flow, your work focus and productivity increase. Build a corporate athlete flow practice much the same way you build a practice outdoors. It's all about choices. Choose to fuel the flow.