

Inspired Life Formula with Nina Lockwood Module 6: Find Your Flow

Create a life supported by synchronicity and coincidence so you have what you need when you need it.

This is Nina Lockwood and welcome to Find Your Flow, Module 6 of the Inspired Life Formula.

In this module we're going to look at the concept of being in flow, and we're going to examine three components: what it means to be in flow, why you would want to and how to get into it. And guess what: because you've already been developing and refining relevant skills from earlier modules, you'll have a deeper understanding of how to apply or build on them as you course correct your thinking so that your whole life becomes an expression of flow.

We'll also look at the differences between synchronicity and coincidence, and we'll explore what it means to have your internal state (that's your thoughts and your feelings) reflected in your external circumstances (that's what happens to you).

Let's start with a general definition of flow, which the dictionary describes as "a steady continuous stream" - so, think of the current of a river - there's movement; things appear and disappear, they change frequency, consciousness moves in and out of form . If you use the analogy of life as a river, you see pretty clearly that a source other than and greater than you has already established that movement, its cycles and potential blockages.

Being in flow reflects a very specific perspective on life. Imagine a scale or an old fashioned applause meter with an arrow that moves from one side to another, at each end of the scale is a perspective which is 180 degrees different from the other. At one end is a point of view that says life is basically meaningless and arbitrary; life is simply a series of indifferent, random events in which you're either a passive recipient or victim. This is

the state in which it feels like life is happening TO you. There's no support or influence or comfort from a higher source, and you believe that how you think has very little influence on what actually happens in your life. The notion that you could possibly attract or invite positive experiences into your life through your thoughts, intentions, visualizations or affirmations defies logic. Things just happen; you do the best you can through your will power, force - making efforts in the external, physical world by getting things done and attempting as best you can to control the outcome. And if you can't verify an idea with your five senses, it can't be proven and therefore doesn't exist. Here's where those old sayings about pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps or being the proverbial captain of your own ship comes in. You operate almost exclusively from the thinking mind rather than the feeling heart, and it's a very isolated, lonely place to be. Can you see how this kind of thinking relates to the materialist perspective and the sense of separate self that we looked at in Module 2?

At the other end of that scale or meter is the belief that life is benevolent and full of support, that events happen for you and not meant to get in your way. At this level of awareness, life has purpose and order and you're given exactly what you need when you need it. You recognize you're an inseparable from the multidimensional fabric of life so you feel connected and valuable. You consciously choose your thoughts and feelings because you recognize that they have a definite effect not only on you but on other people and the world around you. You know there are unseen forces guiding you and influencing your life so you feel supported and taken care of. You don't try to "push" the river because you don't need to control what happens because Life itself already does that and you know how to find the value in what does happen.

Now, obviously, how we see life is not always as clear cut as that, especially when we have a setback or we feel stuck in our efforts or triggered emotionally and we revert back to thinking and reacting in ways that reveal our misunderstandings or confusion. Nevertheless, it's good to think about this scale and reflect on what kind of thinking has brought us to where we are now in our lives and how we can move the arrow towards a more desirable, effortless way of living.

And this is where I want to bring in the concepts of synchronicity and coincidence, because those two ideas relate directly to those opposite sides of the scale. So let's bring out the dictionary again and look at the definition of synchronicity, which is "the simultaneous occurrence of events that appear significantly related but have no discernible causal connection." Okay, so meaningful, useful events are happening to us but how they have come to be is not clear -that is, we can't figure it out simply by using our rational minds to figure out why.

Coincidence is defined almost identically: unlikely or unexpected events happening at the same time. But here's the really important difference between the two which clearly indicates on which end of the scale your thinking resides. Coincidence is considered a chance event, luck, good fortune; with no rhyme or reason attached to it, especially if it's anything having to do with your internal state.

Synchronicity, on the other hand, is interpreted as intentional or deliberate - as a natural expression of our connection with a greater whole that allows for our inner world - our desires and intentions - to be reflected in the events that happen to us. Our thoughts and feelings and our actions don't happen in a separate, discontinuous world - they're intertwined in a unified, connected web of life of which we are an integral part. And as we learn to see synchronicity as a validation of our actions, we find a growing clarity and freedom, peace of mind, as we see that we're supported and guided. The world is not against us because we ARE the world. This point of view is characteristic of the opposite end of the meter we've been using, in fact, at this end of the scale there's a widely held belief that there's no such thing as coincidence.

So, once again, it comes back to the choice we make about how we live: think back to module 4 and the idea of looking at life as a story which we have the power to question and reinterpret. If we recognize that how we interpret life expands or limits our happiness and fulfillment; if we're curious about discovering just whether - and how -we are a part of a larger whole, then we'll be inspired to make the efforts to find out who and what we are. And curiously, sometimes... we don't intentionally make that choice - something beyond our logical, rational mind makes that decision for us. How exciting!

So, as we move deeper into the nature of flow, I want to acknowledge a particular use of the term, “being in the flow or in the zone” that came into use in the field of positive psychology in 1990 in the book: “Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience.” I think you’ll see right away why it’s important to acknowledge. Being in the flow or in the zone was used to describe a very specific mental state, one which you’ve probably experienced at some point in your life. For example, let’s say you were a professional tennis player. If you were in the flow or in the zone, you’d have become so completely immersed in playing tennis that you lost all sense of time, any sense of distraction, you merged with the game, as if the game was being played through you rather than by you. The demands of the game were perfectly in synch with your abilities and your skill level. And it felt amazing: effortless, profoundly satisfying, you weren’t aware of challenges or demands or of time passing - your sense of a separate you dissolved and everything happened seamlessly.

Because this is so powerful and so gratifying, being in the flow is described as an “optimal experience,” something to be sought after because of the deep feelings of happiness and contentment that arise. Life is richer, more meaningful; you’re aware of a deep sense of oneness as you focus on that single activity that engages every part of your being: your body, your mind, your heart and your spirit. What if you lived your life this way?

This particular example of being in the zone is specifically related to doing or creating or expressing something that requires specific skills and a clear goal or outcome, so you hear about it happening most frequently in sports or in the arts. Athletes and artists in particular find themselves completely immersed in what they’re doing and it’s as though the activity itself takes over and expresses itself through them. You also hear about this occurring in zen buddhist art forms like archery and floral design and also in the eastern practices of tai chi and chi gong, where you lose the distinction between where you begin and end and where the form and the flow of energy begin and end.

I’m bringing up the usage of this term, being in the flow because, although this type of experience is event-specific and occurs within set parameters

of time, skill and degree of challenge, the qualitative result is very similar to what it would be like to live your life in flow. That can and does happen - not from perfecting manual or physical skills as well as focus and determination but from developing the inner skills, the right mind set and the right focus. Your life can be filled with the same kind of joy and aliveness and satisfaction. In the book, *The Power of Flow*, flow is described as the “natural effortless unfolding of our lives that moves us towards wholeness and harmony.” The phrase “being in the right place at the right time doing the right thing” perfectly describes what happens to you when that flow becomes the feedback mechanism to your thoughts and feelings. So let’s look at some concepts found in *The Power of Flow* and combine them with the ideas and the practices we’ve learned in earlier ILF modules so we can begin to enjoy this seemingly magical state of being.

Once you’ve decided you want to experience life in flow, your intention is set to see the world in a new way. Think of it as deciding to visit a foreign place and maybe even move there, so you’ll need to know what to bring and what to look for.

What should you bring? Start with trust. This may be a process for you, as learn to trust your own abilities to observe, reflect, grow and learn. Then bring your wordless, present-moment awareness so you can fully engage in the here and now where nothing is lacking. Use your skills of felt sense, groundedness, alignment and open heartedness to help you notice the details of your surroundings and the messages that are being sent to you. Bring an open mind, an allowing that reflects a readiness to be with whatever happens because you know that everything that happens has meaning and value. Bring a sense of adventure that will allow you to go out of your comfort zone and take risks with new thoughts about new possibilities. And finally, bring at least a willingness to be open to the possibility that everything is unfolding as it should and that the art of living - how you live your life - is equally if not more important than the outcome. As you let the universe in, let divine intervention reveal itself, Your job is simply to show up, do what needs to be done and know that failure is not possible when everything that happens is already intended for the highest and best good for all.

What should you look for (or at)? Be willing to look at how you get in your own way and how the pain from fear and anger and loss prevent you from hearing your own inner wisdom, then use your tools to let them go and replace them with clear seeing. Look for the events that turn out in your favor, especially when you don't think you've done anything to make them happen that way. Look at your surroundings in detail as you go about your day - does what you see relate in some way to what you have set as your goal or your direction? Remember that messages can appear in the most unlikely way: through the lyrics of a song, in a passing comment, or in a headline. Pay attention to those times when things fall into place, people or opportunities come into your life at the perfect time and in the perfect way, and experiment with replacing the notion of luck or good fortune with the idea that life is affirming or validating the direction you're going in. And of course, notice if you're trying to push the river or are willing to allow it to move in its own way so that you can relax into and see yourself as part of what's happening around you.

No doubt as you've listened to these descriptions of flow and synchronicity, you recognized periods or events in your life when you were in flow. You might want to write them down in your journal, not only to acknowledge them but to set the stage for a heightened awareness of how flow is waiting to be recognized in your life now.

Even though I've been talking about each of these elements sequentially, And the process of being in flow happens simultaneously. Once you know what you want, all the steps you've taken to become more aware on all levels of your being, you'll start experiencing a whole body perception where information is perceived simultaneously by that combined felt sense throughout your body, your brain, even your energy field.

In the beginning of this recording I mentioned that much of what you've learned earlier in the ILF program has prepared you and maybe even given you experiences of being living in flow. If you were familiar with being in the flow before the ILF and want to make it a consistent part of your life, the exercises that follow will give you ways to fine tune what you perceive and how you perceive it.

Our goal is to bring increasing consciousness to our perceptual abilities. In the exercises that follow, you'll learn the way your body is most familiar processing information and what part of the brain usually processes that information. So, There's an assessment to learn your dominant learning style (that's all about which one of your senses you rely on the most), and a brain hemisphere assessment that reveals whether you're predominantly right or left brained. Once you know these things, you can then learn how to balance both sides of the brain so that the two sides function as a single harmonious unit and your perceptions reveal greater and greater meaning.