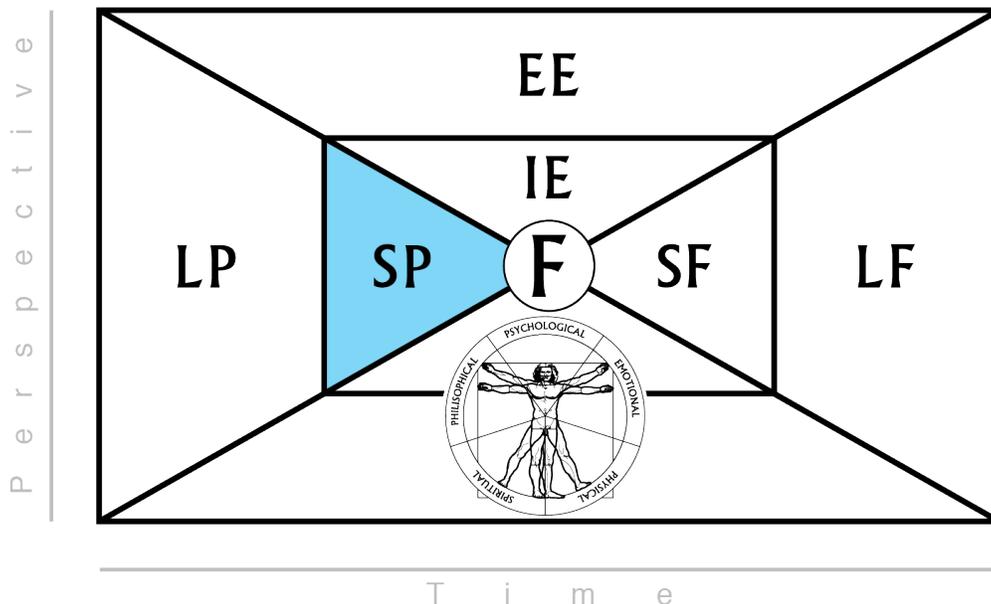




FINDING YOUR FLOW TOOLKIT
VOL. 47
EFFECTIVE USE OF MISTAKES

"If you are not making mistakes, then you are not doing anything..."

-- John Wooden



When I was a kid, I played a lot of tennis. My 10,000 hours was achieved in just under 10 years. The game seemed my best friend when I was advancing at a fast clip; but when I was struggling—

look out! The junior circuit was rife with racket throwers and I admit, a few of my own found their way into the dumpster after a particularly upsetting tournament.

This was not an uncommon phenomenon for highly competitive tennis players back in the day of McEnroe, Nastasi, Connors, Vilas & Borg—except Borg had a particularly sweet temperament on the court!

It wasn't the racket throwing that was the big problem (unless the tournament director saw you)—heck, letting off a little steam could sometimes calm things down a bit—it was the mental and emotional price that was paid for doing it. Again we re-visit mindset.

In the flow literature, one of the big factors that contribute to the experience is a "loss of ego-awareness". What is this? Essentially it is a separation of "who you are" from "what you do". Think of this for a moment... and consider the MLA's that you most want to perform well in. Do you get so invested in these arenas that when the pressure is on you begin the "what if" thinking?

- "What if I miss that shot and I'm down break point?"
- "What if I make the wrong comment and people judge me for it?"
- "What if I put my best efforts into this project and I screw up?"
- "What if s/he says no"
- "What if, what if, what if..."

Sound familiar?

It is a Catch-22: By engaging your ego you fully invest yourself in the task or arena. By contrast your ego is constantly judging your performance against your expectations. This takes your attention out of the moment and throws you into every focus dimension you can think of:

- Past—“remember what happened last time?”
- Future—“what if I choke?”
- Outside—“I wonder whose watching?”
- Inside—“I’m scared to lose!”

... except for the here and now—the only time where you actually perform.

So, how do you rid yourself of this ego? It begins once again with mind-set. Let’s take a moment and review three mind-sets that will help you move from self-defeating to self-defining behavior.

Mind-set # 1: Separate “Who” from “What”

The healthiest and happiest performers are those individuals who maintain a strong boundary between their performance and how they think about themselves personally. Yes they may be frustrated with their performance, but regardless of the outcome they leave the arena with esteem in tact. This stems from their values: never allowing a performance arena to exceed the value of self, family, friends, etc...

This mindset puts performing into perspective, making you more relaxed (at every level), less vulnerable to negative outcomes, and better able to focus in the moment—the very thing you need to achieve the results you want.

Mind-set #2: See Failure as Opportunity

How many times have you made the same mistake over and over and expected a different result? This was Einstein’s definition of insanity. But this isn’t insanity—it’s ego.

When you are unable to accept and learn from your mistakes (because you can’t see them or acknowledging them is too painful to admit), you tend to repeat the cycle until awareness, frustration or humility compels you to see the error of your ways. Instead of ignoring or beating yourself up for errors, consider every mistake

as an opportunity to learn, grow, and evolve. Rather than being reactive to errors, seek them out and capture the lessons from each and every one. Internalize the word “proactivity”.

Mind-set #3: See Mistakes as Performance Accelerators

In many professional environments, discovering our performance gaps are met with resistance and fear. By contrast, Olympic and other elite performers see each failed event as an opportunity to learn and adapt to the physics of performance more quickly.

It's no longer about avoiding mistakes; it's about getting them over and done with as quickly as possible. That is how Thomas Edison's mind-set when inventing the electric light bulb, NASA's mind-set in their quest to land a man on the moon before the Russians, and it's how Abraham Lincoln thought as he sought to make a name for himself through multiple, personal, business, and political failures

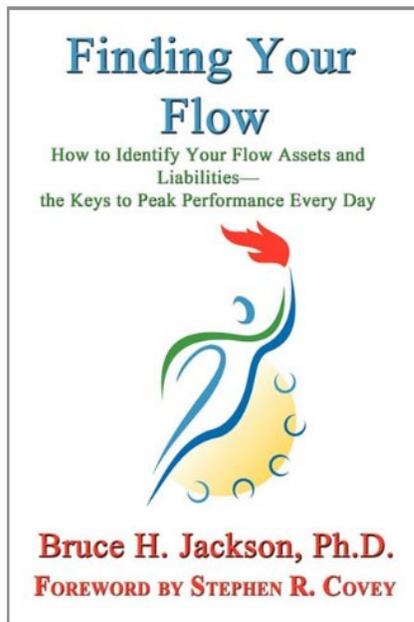
Consider these three mindsets. Test them out in small spaces and notice what happens. You may find that you more greatly enjoy the process of your craft while simultaneously getting the very results you always wanted. Hmmm, less personal stress and better results. That sounds about right!

Above all, refuse to judge or criticize yourself for mistakes or poor performances. Tear apart your game, look under the hood of your methods, challenge your assumptions, yes, but keep yourself at a safe distance. Both you and your arena will be glad you did.

EXERCISE AND PRACTICE:

- No tool this week, just mindset practice (see below)
- Consider some of your performance arenas that you struggle with the most. Go through a mental exercise where you take on the three mind-sets above. Visualize yourself putting your

performance into its proper perspective, notice in your minds-eye what it would look like to learn from each experience, then observe how quickly you are able to adjust, improve, and grow.



Finding Your Flow: How to Identify Your Flow Assets and Liabilities—The Keys to Peak Performance Every Day

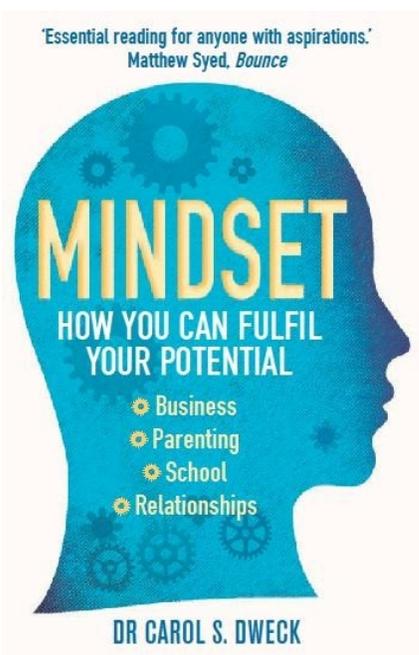
Do you remember your last peak performance? Do you remember asking: how do I do this? How can I do it again? If you have asked this question, and want to know the answer, then this is the book you have been searching for.

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RESOURCES:

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- [Mindset: How You Can Fulfill Your Potential by Carol Dweck](#)



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