

**The Experience of Flow Among Flourishing Individuals: A Qualitative Exploration**

Karina Esche

Bachelor Thesis Psychology

Department of Positive Clinical Psychology & Technology

July 1st, 2021

1<sup>st</sup> Supervisor: Christina Ullrich

2<sup>nd</sup> Supervisor: Dr. Marijke Schotanus-Dijkstra

Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Science

University of Twente, Enschede

### **Abstract**

Within research on the optimal human experience in positive psychology, flow is said to be a facilitating factor for flourishing mental health, but research on the experience of flow and its perceived contribution to mental health among flourishing individuals is limited. Within this study, the questions of which kinds of activities flourishers report as facilitators of flow and which perceived effects the state of flow has on flourisher's mental health, if any, were answered. A qualitative study design was used to examine open question responses by fifty-two flourishers. A codebook was developed to capture all reported activities and accounts of the effect of flow. The findings show that the kinds of flow activities that flourishers reported range from leisure activities to goal- and productivity-oriented pursuits and social interactions across fifteen different activity types. Flourishers also predominantly stated that flow contributed to their flourishing mental health and that most flow experiences were of positive perceived impact. Nonetheless, some accounts of negative effects on flourishing mental health, explained by overindulgence in flow states, were also found. The findings of this study offer more detailed insights into what experiencing flow is like among flourishers. Nevertheless, given the relatively novel nature of flow theory and research, further research is needed to understand how the experiences of flow and flourishing are linked and whether flow states have a facilitating impact on flourishing mental health.

*Keywords: flow, flourishing, wellbeing, positive psychology, optimal mental health*

Who does not know the feeling of losing oneself in hours of their favourite hobby? Maybe while reading until the novel is finished and you look up at the clock, only to see that three hours have gone by like nothing? Or while working on a fascinating project, only to finish and notice that the last time you ate was ages ago, but you did not even notice the hunger? This phenomenon is called “flow”, and it is one that most people seem to be familiar with from their engagement in hobbies or other attention-consuming activities. According to Csikszentmihalyi et al. (2014), “flow is a subjective state that people report when they are completely involved in something to the point of forgetting time, fatigue, and everything else but the activity itself” (p. 230). Vittersø (2003) deemed the positive subjective experience of flow an active contributing factor to a “good life”. This positive connotation of the phenomenon has led to research on the experience of flow within projects to do with art, science, and other activities within the last decades (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Burkewitz, 2014). Through these studies, it became apparent that flow states were mainly fuelled by high intrinsic motivation to fulfil an activity that is rewarding through its process alone, rather than the outcome, which is a crucial characteristic of flow activities (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

When it comes to the phenomenon’s characteristics, Csikszentmihalyi et al. (2014) stated that flow is facilitated under three main conditions. First, flow is experienced when an activity is connected to a clear set of goals, which add direction and meaning to the process of the activity and channel attention forward, rather than towards a single outcome. The second condition requires the challenges of the activity and the skills that the individual has to offer to be in balance, as perceived by the individual themselves rather than based on their actual presence. This is because the perception of the match between one’s skills and the challenges one is presented with results in optimal absorption of attention (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2014). As a third prerequisite, the flow experience requires clear and immediate feedback. This facilitates a flowing progress of the activity, through which the individual can adjust their actions rapidly and is faced with minimal doubt about each upcoming task (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2014).

The phenomenon of flow in itself has an interesting function to the human experience. It has been found that the experience of flow results in people engaging in activities more persistently and not giving up on them as quickly because of the rewards linked to the experience (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). This ultimately leads to the rapid development of skills related to the activity and can result in increased achievement and overall commitment in other areas of life, such as among students in their high school career

(Carli et al., 1988).

In the past, research on flow has shown that flow can be experienced by anyone regardless of age, gender, culture, socio-economic status, or the type of activity that they are engaged in (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). The activities for which flow has been found to be a factor include those within art, science, sports, writing, and the aesthetic experience (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Qualitative studies were done on professionals within these fields, like elite athletes and writers, in which responses about aspects of their flow experience were analysed for content (Jackson, 1995; Perry, 1999). Furthermore, flow can be experienced individually but also within a group of people performing the same or similar activities together. For example, in a semi-structured interview study on the topic of the flow experience during musical practice group activities among professional musicians, multiple characteristics of the individual flow experience were observed in a group just as an individual performing a solo activity would experience them (Hart et al., 2013).

There is another central concept in positive psychology for the study of optimal experience and wellbeing, namely flourishing. Flourishing is defined as a state of optimal mental health, beyond the absence of mental illness (Keyes, 2002). Seligman created a model to describe flourishing mental health through five building blocks that each facilitate it, the PERMA model of wellbeing (Seligman, 2011). Within this model, flow is named as a product of the pillar “Engagement”, specifically if optimal engagement is reached (Seligman, 2011; Khaw & Kern, 2014). Generally, flow is not limited to the experience of flourishing, as flow experiences can also occur in everyday activities like washing dishes or driving a car, with no regard for the mental wellbeing of the person carrying them out (Keller & Bless, 2008). Nonetheless, seeing as the PERMA model’s explanation of what constitutes flourishing explicitly names flow as a contributing concept, flow has been said to be related to flourishing as a facilitating factor (Thakur & Shashwati, 2019).

In accordance with flow as a facilitator for flourishing, Csikszentmihalyi (1996) found that a frequent experience of the flow state results in an increase in happiness and satisfaction, which translates to higher mental wellbeing. Consequently, it can logically be assumed that flourishers experience a lot of flow states, as based on Csikszentmihalyi’s (1996) previously mentioned findings and Seligman’s (2011) view of flow’s role within the PERMA model. The connection between the two concepts has also been explicitly acknowledged within research in the fields of sports (Stander, 2015), gaming (Vella & Johnson, 2012), and Csikszentmihalyi’s exploration of the flow phenomenon (Nakamura &

Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

Within this field, previous findings have offered valuable insights into the activities that bring about flow and the experience of the phenomenon itself, but most research was limited to studies that did not consider the mental wellbeing, or flourishing, of their participants as a factor. Studies were conducted with students or athletes for example, but with no prerequisite of a certain degree of mental wellbeing (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). There has also been previous exploration into the methods of facilitating flourishing through flow activities, as a study on utilising creative flow to facilitate an improvement in mental health has shown that a contributing effect of flow on flourishing can be seen in creative hobbies (Burkewitz, 2014). Despite the valuable insights into flow's contribution to flourishing that Burkewitz (2014) offered, the focus was limited to only one specific kind of flow activity and there was no exploration into whether the study's participants were flourishers to begin with. Evidently, there is currently no existing research on the experience of flow among flourishing individuals specifically, despite the two phenomena being generally known to be connected. New insights into this topic would broaden the understanding of how all kinds of activities contribute to and enhance flourishing, specifically from the experiences of people that are flourishing, and this could lead to new findings on the prerequisites for optimal welfare.

As for the scientific exploration of this topic, a qualitative approach to the exploration of flow experiences has previously been shown to be reliable for identifying dimensions and characteristics of flow (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). Therefore, fitting to the qualitative nature of the semi-structured interview study that research on the flow concept originated from, this study's exploration of the phenomenon will also be based on the qualitative approach (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Next to the previously mentioned qualitative studies within the field, qualitative research has been previously conducted to explore the flow experience with factors that characterise, facilitate, and hinder the state among elite athletes (Jackson, 1995). This was done through an inductive content analysis of the athletes' responses to open-ended questions on the matter (Jackson, 1995). The study's findings listed factors such as mental and physical preparation, focus, confidence, as well as how the performance of the physical activity felt and progressed and an optimal level of arousal and confidence, which could be obtained from the detailed responses of the athletes (Jackson, 1995).

All the mentioned insights into what flow research has uncovered so far and what has yet to be explored offer the opportunity to examine the particular activities that bring about a

flow state in flourishing people, explicitly, and explore how these activities may contribute to flourishing. The current study aims to examine the behaviours that flourishing individuals identify as activities that bring about a state of flow, based on their own experiences, as well as the descriptions of whether and how entering a flow state contributes to their flourishing, based on their own accounts. This focus lies on exploring experiences of flow exclusively in flourishers to determine which instances bring about flow, specifically among flourishers, and how many and which kind of subjective accounts attribute flow activities to flourishing.

Concretely, the two research questions that pose as the base of this study are the following: (1) What experiences of flow do flourishing individuals report? (2) Is flow reported as a contributing factor to flourishing, and if so, in what way? Based on prior research, it is expected that the accounts of activities can be partly categorised in arts, science, sports and literary writing. Additionally, prior findings suggest that the consensus on the effect of flow on wellbeing will be that there is a noticeable impact to begin with and that this impact is of positive nature.

## **Methods**

### **Design**

A qualitative content analysis of written narratives was conducted using an online questionnaire with two qualitative open questions. Qualitative data was collected about the participants' own account of their experiences of flow and flow-activities and how flow contributes to their flourishing. For screening purposes, a survey containing the Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF, see Appendix B) was used to measure mental wellbeing, indicating the presence or absence of flourishing for each participant at baseline, followed by the open questions. Data collection took place over a period of three weeks in April 2021. The research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Twente (ethical number 210168).

### **Participants and Procedure**

Participants were recruited with the help of a convenience sampling method, in which a total of 12 researchers, second- and third-year Psychology students at the University of Twente, reached out to their social network via online platforms like Whatsapp, Instagram, and Facebook. Inclusion criteria consisted of the minimum age of 18 years old, being of German nationality and therefore a sufficient knowledge of the German language, in order to be able to fill in the questionnaire in German. Additionally, the participants were required to

have a stable internet connection and email address due to the online nature of the study.

After the recruitment of participants, the link to the online questionnaires was distributed to the participants via email. All participants were sent three questionnaires over the span of three weeks, each time separated by a one-week period of time to answer the questions. For this study, only the content from the first and second questionnaire was included.

At baseline, the participants were informed about the nature and content of the study and consented to participation. The baseline questionnaire also contained the 14-item MHC-SF, which was used as a tool to assess the mental wellbeing of the participants and determine whether they were flourishers or not (see Appendix B). For a flourishing MHC-SF score, the mean score for each of the three hedonic wellbeing symptoms (items 1-3) and at least six of the positive functioning symptoms (items 4-14) was required to indicate an experience of “every day” or “almost every day” (Keyes, 2009). The MHC-SF has good convergent validity, discriminant validity, as well as high internal reliability and moderate test-retest reliability (Lamers et al., 2011). At baseline, Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of .90 was found, indicating excellent reliability.

Within the second questionnaire, each of the participants received the same open questions on the topic of flow, regardless of their indication of flourishing. The MHC-SF scores from the baseline questionnaire were used to categorize participants into flourishing or non-flourishing. The resulting categorization was then used as a screening tool for selecting the relevant open question responses of flourishing individuals. The last questionnaire contained a debriefing for the participants to inform them about the detailed purpose of the data that was gathered about them. Finally, the responses to the MHC-SF questionnaire and the open questions were evaluated.

In total, out of 153 recruited respondents, 69 obtained scores on the MHC-SF that indicated flourishing mental health. Out of these 69 flourishing respondents, 52 (75.36%) completed the two open questions on flow and were included in the study, of which 32 were female and 20 were male. Participants were 33.69 years old on average ( $SD= 16.15$ ). Out of the 52 respondents, 30 (57.6%) obtained secondary education, while 12 (23.1%) obtained a higher academic education degree, 3 (5.7%) obtained vocational education and 6 (11.5%) obtained other levels of education that were not listed.

## Measures and Materials

For the qualitative open questions, participants were asked to answer two questions

concerning how and during which activities they experience flow (*Please describe the activities in your life that lead you to experience a flow state, as well as how and how frequently you experience flow in connection with these activities. Describe how you feel while experiencing flow and what possibly comes to mind while in that state.*), as well as how flow influences their flourishing, from their own evaluation (*From your perspective, how does experiencing flow contribute to your overall mental health? Describe the ways that you notice, if there are any, what effect entering a flow state has on your overall mental health and wellbeing.*).

The two questions were freely formulated based on the research questions, as the first one is centred around the reports of experiences of flow in the flourishing individuals and the second one asks for their own accounts of the influence of flow on their wellbeing. In the latter, flourishing was not explicitly mentioned as the participants themselves did not know whether they were flourishing, so an account of their mental wellbeing was instead asked for. A guideline was to write 100 to 600 words for each open question and the questions were answered in German.

### **Data Analysis**

A content analysis was conducted to evaluate the narrative open question responses based on the participants' experiences with flow in terms of circumstances and activities, as well as their own account of how the experience of flow could possibly influence their flourishing, under the assumption that they are flourishing. A codebook was developed by means of deductive coding in order to define the codes concretely and make the coding process more reliable and less subjective.

Some codes were first determined based on the two research questions, creating the two main code categories "Experiences of flow" and "Perceived effect of flow on mental wellbeing" (see Appendix A). The subcodes *Art*, *Physical Activity*, *Literature* and *Science* were determined based on existing research by Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2014) about activities based on art, science, writing, and sports being tied to flow. The remaining subcodes were derived inductively from a scan of the content of the flourishing responses and the statements about flow that could be found, namely *Music*, *Hobbies*, *Social interaction*, *Romantic relationships*, *Solitude*, *Solving Problems*, *Spirituality*, *Nature*, *Working towards a goal*, *Gaining knowledge*, and *Occupation* for the first main code.

For the second main category, the inductively created subcodes included *Mental relief*, *Encouraging personal and bodily needs*, *Mood improvement*, *Increased self-*



*appreciation, Mental stress, and Mood decline*. The remaining two subcodes *Neglecting personal and bodily needs*, as well as *Decline of self-appreciation* were partly inductively created and partly included because they are counterparts to the subcodes *Encouraging personal and bodily needs and Increased self-appreciation*. Including all positively- and negatively connotated *perceived effect* codes with a corresponding counterpart was expected to show which effect was reported more often.

To ensure validity, one researcher developed a first version of a codebook and two independent coders used this to individually code 4 responses, after which the differences in coding were discussed until a consensus was reached. The main improvement points were to include a subcode for occupation, romantic relationships, and self-appreciation, as this was not part of the first version of the code book. The code book was adjusted accordingly, mainly by adding a few codes and dividing certain topics more clearly in the definitions and adding coding rules. This final code book was used by the two coders to code another 4 responses independently. The subcodes, excluding the categorization by the main codes, were used to test for interrater reliability. Cohen's kappa was calculated and indicated excellent agreement between the two coders ( $\kappa = .83$ ). The final code book was used to code all responses from flourishing individuals (see Appendix A).

A content analysis was conducted using version 9.0.24 of the programme ATLAS.ti, Windows (ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2021) in which the open question responses were scanned and filtered for relevant content that could then be coded according to the final code book. Consequently, only the parts of the responses that codes could be assigned to were coded, while some content was left uncoded due to it not being relevant for the topic of research. An example for this would be if responses contained statements about what effect flow could potentially have on other people, while the person mentioned that this had not happened to them personally, which is therefore not relevant for this study as the focus lies on the respondents' personal experiences.

The codes from the code book were used to categorize fragments from the participants' answers based on the relatedness to the topic of the code. A response consisted of two combined answers to the two open questions on flow that were given by the same participant. Each code could be assigned to one fragment per response. The length of a fragment could range from one word to a few sentences and a single fragment could be coded by multiple different codes simultaneously, as this would make it possible to include all applicable activities that might be mentioned in one word or sentence.

The free format of the responses often resulted in short listings of activities that only

consisted of a few words per activity and the content of the fragments was often fitting for more than one subcode, so it was decided to allow for an overlap of multiple applicable subcodes if necessary. A guideline for the correct coding of a fragment was that it could only be assigned a code if the code or the meaning of the code, as per its definition, was clearly mentioned. Coding could not occur just based on the assumption of a fit when only vague formulation is given. For example, a clear statement was “I feel flow when I read.”, while a vague statement would be “I feel flow when I listen to music on my headphones. Then I often dance to it in my room.”, which would give clear indication for the sub-code *Music* but would only assume for the sub-code *Physical activity* to be present because there is no explicit mention of dancing being a flow-activity.

Following the content analysis, the frequencies of the codes within the full sample of narratives were calculated. To also evaluate the resulting fragments in terms of content, axial coding was used to categorize subcodes with common themes together, as axial coding is used to group openly coded subcodes under more refined, thematically distinct categories (Williams & Moser, 2019). Codes for Self-motivated leisure activity, Interpersonal contact, Educational productivity-directed activity and Goal-directed activity for the first main code and subcodes reflecting negative and positive mental wellbeing for the second main code were created. The axial codes were determined by two independent researchers, who grouped all subcodes in inductively formulated and named categories, in accordance with the “constant comparison method” (Williams & Moser, 2019, p. 51) of the axial coding step. The two independent coders’ decisions for the resulting axial codes and the subcodes they include were then compared. After some discussion about which codes belong to each axial code, a consensus was reached.

## Results

### Qualitative Analysis

A total of 272 fragments were coded across all 52 responses from flourishing participants, of which 147 (54.04%) fragments fell under the main code *Experiences of flow* and 125 (45.96%) were categorised under the main code *Perceived effect of flow on mental wellbeing*. *Experiences of flow* was coded through 15 subcodes, which were grouped under four axial codes. *Perceived effect of flow on mental wellbeing* was coded through a total of 8 subcodes and grouped under two axial codes. See Table 1 for a complete overview, definitions, frequencies, and percentages of each subcode, as computed based on occurrence among all 272 fragments.

Main code and axial code	Subcode	Definition	Example	n (% of 272 fragments)	Percentage within corresponding main code
<b>Experiences of flow</b>		Activities and situations during or after which the respondent notices their state of “flow”.		147 (54%)	
Self-motivated leisure activity		All activities done for personal pleasure that are performed in one’s free time and not motivated by societal demands for productivity.		69 (25.4%)	46.9%
	Physical activity	The act of engaging in physical activity of any kind.	“I experience this while exercising, for example with running (runner’s high).”	16 (5.9%)	10.9%
	Literature	The act of writing or actively working on, as well as reading or learning about literature.	“My biggest hobby is reading. [...] I forget everything around me when I read.”	13 (4.8%)	8.8%

Hobbies	The act of engaging in pass-time activities that are of a nature not fitting under the subcode <i>Art, Music, Literature, Science</i> or <i>Physical Activity</i> but are done for personal pleasure and enjoyment in one's free time.	"I feel flow when I engage in my hobbies (crafting, sewing)..."	12 (4.4%)	8.2%
Music	The act of listening to and learning about music in all forms, as well as creating and playing it individually with instruments, vocals, or other elements.	"I experience flow when I play the piano."	11 (4%)	7.5%
Art	The act of painting, doodling, photographing, filming, editing or any other form of individually creating art, as well as observing or learning about art. Art is defined as all visual arts, namely physical art pieces, photography, motion picture art.	"I feel it when I paint, photograph something [...]"	10 (3.7%)	6.8%

Solitude	Being alone or acting by oneself, even if in the presence of other people.	“When I connect with myself [...]”	3 (1.1%)	2%
Spirituality	Engagement in spiritual (meaning religious and other orientations) rituals	“I experience flow when I [...], meditate, [...]”	2 (0.7%)	1.4%
Nature	The act of observing and spending time in nature.	“When I look at the sea, the vast mountains and the beauty of nature around me [...]”	2 (0.7%)	1.4%
Goal-directed activity	All activities driven by a clear goal to achieve that are done for the sake of reaching that goal.		34 (12.5%)	23.1%

Working towards a goal	The act of engaging in activities or doing work that is oriented at a pre-set goal that is to be reached.	“I established clear goals beforehand and worked on the assignment until I reached them.”	22 (8.1%)	15%
Solving problems	The act of overcoming obstacles during activities.	“Whenever I can solve a lot of different problems for my university work.”	12 (4.4%)	8.2%
Educational and productivity-directed activity	Activities that are educational and driven by societal or personal demands for productivity		29 (10.7%)	19.7%
Gaining knowledge	The act of actively studying and learning new things, regardless of the topic or setting.	“I feel flow when I [...], listen to lectures that are interesting to me [...].”	15 (5.5%)	10.2%

Occupation	The engagement in one’s occupational activities, regardless of the kind of work that is being done and the field of the occupation.	“When I work on programming, which is my professional occupation.”	14 (5.2%)	9.5%
Science	The act of engaging in or learning about science.	“It occurs most often when I [...], am planning a scientific experiment, [...]”	2 (0.7%)	1.4%
Interpersonal contact	All activities that involve social contact with one or more people.		13 (4.8%)	8.8%
Social interaction	The act of engaging in social contact with other people.	“And I feel it when I make plans with my friends and spend time with them,”	11 (4%)	7.5%

Romantic relationships	The relationship with a significant romantic partner and the activities, emotions and thoughts associated with that.	“[...] and whenever I am in the presence of my wife and feel connected to her.”	2 (0.7%)	1.4%
<b>Perceived effect of flow on mental wellbeing</b>	The respondent’s personal account of how experiencing flow affects their overall mental health and wellbeing.		125 (46%)	
Perceived positive effect on mental wellbeing	The respondent’s personal evaluation of flow to positively contribute to their mental health and wellbeing.		103 (37.9%)	82.4%
Mood improvement	The respondent’s own account of an elevated mood and increased happiness.	“I feel more happy, feel less grief and laugh more.”	38 (14%)	30.4%



Mental relief	Being relieved of otherwise present stress, worries and personal problems due to the experience of flow.	“I feel light, free and positively recharged.”	31 (11.4%)	24.8%
Increased self-appreciation	The respondent’s own account of an increased self-esteem and sense of value of themselves, often through a sense of productivity, competence, or other positive attributes about themselves that the flow state stimulated.	“This state makes me feel good and increases my self-confidence.”	28 (10.3%)	22.4%
Encouraging personal and bodily needs	Being stimulated to keep up good habits and take care of oneself through the state of flow.	“I go to bed happier, sleep better and wake up more relaxed and confident to start my day in peace.”	6 (2.2%)	4.8%
Perceived negative effect on mental wellbeing	The respondent’s personal evaluation of flow to negatively contribute to their mental health and wellbeing.		22 (8.1%)	17.6%

Mental stress	Being increasingly stressed and mentally strained as a result of being in the state of flow.	“This also reaches my private life. I think about it at home and don’t sleep well because I think about it until late at night.”	9 (3.3%)	7.2%
Neglecting personal and bodily needs	Being so caught up in flow, most likely for a prolonged period of time, that personal needs are neglected, for example hygiene, rest, stress relief, nutrition, relaxation.	“When I reach flow, I often forget to eat or don’t drink anything for 6-12 hours.”	9 (3.3%)	7.2%
Mood decline	The respondent’s own account of a worsened mood and decreased happiness or even feeling depressed.	“It’s possible to feel frustrated and overwhelmed after coming out of a state of flow, because you are missing clear thoughts.”	3 (1.1%)	2.4%
Decline of self-appreciation	The respondent’s own account of a decline in their self-esteem and sense of value of themselves, often through a sense of lessened productivity, decreased abilities or other negative attributes about themselves that the flow state stimulated.	“Afterwards, I reproach myself for it.”	1 (0.4%)	0.8%

---

## **Experiences of Flow**

The subcodes under the two main codes *Experiences of flow* were grouped into the corresponding axial codes *Self-motivated leisure activity*, *Interpersonal contact*, *Educational productivity-directed activity* and *Goal-directed activity*. In the following, the results for this main code will be described per axial code, ordered by its frequency.

### ***Experiences of Flow: Self-Motivated Leisure Activity***

*Self-motivated leisure activity* (46.9%) was the most frequently occurring axial code, under which the subcodes *Physical activity* (10.9%), *Literature* (8.8%), *Hobbies* (8.2%), *Music* (7.5%), and *Art* (6.8%) occurred most frequently. Multiple of these activities were often listed as contributing pastimes for a state of flow, as can be seen in the following extracts.

*“Drawing, photography, [...] singing, those are some examples of activities that get me into a state of flow.”*

*“I lose track of time and space when I read a good book, [...] when I take walks on the beach, or even when I clean the house. It also happens when I bake and cook or look for new recipes.”*

Under the same axial code, the subcodes *Solitude* (2%), *Spirituality* (1.4%), and *Nature* (1.4%) were reported less frequently, with each subcode containing two or three fragments.

### ***Experiences of Flow: Goal-Directed Activity***

*Goal-directed activity* (23.1%) was the second most frequently occurring axial code. Its subcode *Working towards a goal* (14.1%) was coded most often out of all 272 fragments and it was often mentioned as the attribute of many different activities that made any of them attractive enough to facilitate flow, as can be seen in the following extract.

*“In most cases in which I reached a flow state, I formulated clear goals for myself that I wanted to reach beforehand.”*

*Solving problems* (8.2%) was also reported numerous times in connection with many different activities, with the common theme of wanting to reach a solution to a problem and being motivated by this outcome despite obstacles that might occur.

### ***Experiences of Flow: Educational and Productivity-Directed Activity***

*Educational and productivity-directed activity* (19.7%) included the subcodes *Gaining knowledge* (10.2%) and *Occupation* (9.5%) of similar occurrence, and *Science*

(1.4%) with low frequency. The coded fragments mentioned activities with an educational aspect to them within various different fields, a few of them scientific.

*“It can occur when I [...] work or study. Most of the time it happens during activities that I have an intrinsic interest in, when I read a book, plan a scientific experiment, do programming or find out about an interesting topic.”*

### ***Experiences of Flow: Interpersonal Contact***

*Interpersonal contact* (8.8%), the least frequently occurring axial code under *Experiences of flow*, was mentioned most often through reports of *Social interaction* (7.5%) and less frequently through *Romantic relationships* (1.4%). Its fragments mentioned talking to friends and family or significant others and, less frequently, the act of generally participating in any kind of social interaction.

*“I feel flow when [...] I am in the presence of my wife and can connected to her.”*

### **Perceived Effect of Flow on Mental Wellbeing**

The subcodes of the second main code *Perceived effect of flow on mental wellbeing* (45.96%) were divided into an axial code for perceived positive impact, as well as one for perceived negative impact of flow and the respective subcode frequencies represent the occurrence of the two opposing effects of flow on mental wellbeing. The results for this main code will be described in the following, ordered by frequency.

#### ***Perceived Effect of Flow on Mental Wellbeing: Perceived Positive Effect on Wellbeing***

Within the main code *Perceived Positive Effect on Wellbeing* (82.4%), the subcode *Mood improvement* (30.4%) was reported most frequently, while *Mental relief* (24.8%) and *Increased self-appreciation* (22.4%) were also defining for the main code. The coded responses included reports of an increase in confidence and happiness, as well as a feeling of being recharged and feeling more relaxed, which the following extract also mentions.

*“I feel happier because of it. I feel less sadness and laugh more. Through this state, I feel balanced and open up to other people. I eat and sleep better and have a more structured routine.”*

The least coded subcode under the perceived positive effect category was *Encouraging personal and bodily needs* (4.8%), in which fragments mentioned better sleep and a more structured day following flow, as mentioned in the above-mentioned extract.

### ***Perceived Effect of Flow on Mental Wellbeing: Perceived Negative Effect on Mental Wellbeing***

For the axial code *Perceived negative effect on mental wellbeing* (17.6%), the subcodes *Mental stress* (7.2%) and *Neglecting personal and bodily needs* (7.2%) were equally present and predominantly contained reports of the activities that facilitated flow reaching over into other areas of life, such as work flows that the person thinks about until late at night, unable to sleep, and forgetting to eat and drink for extended periods of times that are not healthy for the human body, as mentioned in the following extract.

*“I do think that it drains you in the long run. If I spent time in a flow state for a couple of days, I often felt exhausted and only wanted to sleep. I also eat more unhealthily while in the state of flow.”*

*Mood decline* (2.4%) and *Decline of self-appreciation* (0.8%) were only found a few times, indicating that the latter two might not be generally applicable as an effect that flow has.

### **Main Conclusions**

The axial codes within the first main code were most frequently grouped under *Self-motivated leisure activity* (46.9%), followed by *Goal-directed activity* (23.1%), then *Educational and productivity-directed activity* (19.7%) and least frequently *Interpersonal contact* (8.8%). The most frequently occurring subcode within its main code was *Working towards a goal* (15%). Further frequently occurring sub-codes were *Physical activity* (10.9%), *Gaining knowledge* (10.2%), *Occupation* (9.5%) and *Literature* (8.8%). In contrast to what was expected for this study, the subcode *Science* (1.4%) was considerably rare. Overall, the main code *Experiences of flow* was found across a variety of 15 different activities, with each of its subcodes being coded at least two times within the 272 fragments.

Within the second main code, the axial code *Perceived positive effect on mental wellbeing* (82.4%) occurred considerably more often than *Perceived negative effect on mental wellbeing* (17.6%), This indicated that the majority of flourishing individuals attribute a positive effect on mental wellbeing to the phenomenon of flow.

### **Discussion**

The aim of the current study was to explore and define the different activities that bring about flow in flourishing individuals, as well as to gather insight into how the state of

flow influences flourishing based on the flourishing participants' own account.

## **Main Findings**

### *Experiences of flow*

The first important finding was that *Self-motivated leisure activity* was the most frequent axial code, followed by *Goal-directed activity*, *Educational and productivity-directed activity* and *Interpersonal contact*. This suggests that, among flourishing individuals, leisure activities and hobbies are the most prominent flow activities, followed by pursuing goals and productivity and, least frequently, interacting with their social environment. A possible explanation for the order of prominence among these kinds of flow activities can first be based on an explanation of flow by Keller et al. (2007), in which a defining aspect of flow is the execution of skill-related behaviours. Engagement in most hobbies can be said to be skill-related, as they are usually pursued often enough for the person to be skilled at performing them for pleasure. Csikszentmihalyi et al. (2014) found that another condition of flow is that of clear and immediate feedback, which accounts for activities with rewarding qualities. Goal- and productivity-related behaviour incorporate the reward of reaching goals after working towards them, while social interaction does not always offer clear points of reward in day-to-day interactions, which might be why it was less represented as an area of flow within this study.

Further, the study showed that the most frequently occurring subcode was *Working towards a goal*, which can also be explained with previous findings on the conditions of flow, as the phenomenon was found to occur if there are clear goals that an activity is based on (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2014). This finding highlights the fact that having a goal to work towards is an underlying factor for flow and that flourishers are aware of the fact that the pursuit of the goal is what makes them enter a flow state. The following most frequent subcodes were *Physical activity*, *Gaining knowledge*, *Occupation* and *Literature*. The high frequency of *Physical activity* and *Literature* confirms the previously hypothesised importance of sports and writing as activities that contribute to flow, as Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2014) reported these activities to be tied to flow. Further, the subcodes *Gaining knowledge* (10.2%) and *Occupation* (9.5%) also have the clear underlying motivation of a goal, be it productivity or the pursuit of education, and their comparatively high frequency can also be explained with the findings by Csikszentmihalyi et al. (2014). This finding identified new specific areas of goal-driven behaviour, such as the educational

domain and the work field, in which flow occurs and shows that flourishers are also aware of these multiple areas and differentiate between them when identifying what makes them enter flow.

Against previous expectations, it was found that activities to do with *Science* were considerably rare, which diverted from the previous findings about its importance to flow. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) investigated and deemed science a flow-contributing activity, which was not confirmed within this study and suggests that science might not play a very important role to the experience of flow among flourishing individuals. A possible explanation for this unexpected finding could lie in the fact that Csikszentmihalyi (1996) obtained his findings from the statements of scientists and scholars and exclusively focused on people of this educational level to explore the role of science in flow. Therefore, the previously expected importance of science for flow was based on the accounts of academic experts that engage in scientific activities frequently, but the current study's educational level was mostly consistent of graduates of secondary education that might not encounter science as frequently in their daily life. This could have led to the rare reports on science as a flow-activity, since the sample mostly consisted of people from non-academic educational backgrounds.

As a general answer to the question *What experiences of flow do flourishing individuals report?*, the activities that flourishers reported as flow activities could be categorised into a variety of 15 different activities and are listed as follows: Physical activity, acts of reading or writing, various hobbies, musical activities, the acts of creating or observing art, goal and solution-driven activities, learning new things, engaging in one's professional occupation, activities in the scientific field, social and romantic interaction, time spent alone, spiritual practices and time spent in nature, The vast variety of activities that were identified beyond the findings by Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2014) on art, writing, sports and science shows that the spectrum of activities reported ranges across numerous domains and includes experiences of flow that go beyond what previous research has identified so far.

### ***Perceived effects of flow***

An important finding about the perceived effect of flow was that a positive perceived effect of flow reported considerably more often than a negative effect. This firstly indicates that flow is seen as a contributing experience to flourishing and secondly that the perceived positive effects of flow can be seen as more prominent than the perceived negative effects, as based on flourishers' own reports. From the reports of flourishing individuals, most people

reported positive associations with their experiences of flow, mainly through increased happiness and confidence, decreased stress, and a feeling of pride in one's abilities after flow. This is in line with previous findings that define flow as facilitating cognitive efficiency, motivation, happiness, and feelings of enjoyment (Engeser & Schiepe-Tiska, 2012).

Nonetheless, next to the reported higher occurrence of perceived positive effects of flow, there was still mention of perceived negative impacts of flow that was most often tied to overindulgence in a flow activity for an extended time. This suggests that flourishers also experience negative effects of flow and are aware of them, even if most experiences are perceived positively. Previous literature on the characteristics of flow also supports this, which showed flow's effects of happiness and motivation to be contrasted with observations of flow resulting in negative consequences, like too much time spent on flow activities causing an interference with other goals in life or negligence of responsibilities or schedules (Engeser & Schiepe-Tiska, 2012).

To answer the question *Is flow reported as a contributing factor to flourishing and if so, in what way?*, flourishers were found to mainly report flow as a contributing factor with a perceived positive effect on flourishing, but also reported a perceived negative impact on flow if the state is prolonged and overindulged in. This offers the new insight that flourishing individuals perceive flow as a generally positive experience that is linked to their flourishing mental health most of the time, but that they report overindulgence in flow as a factor that can result in negative experiences of flow.

### **Strengths, Limitations and Implications for Future Research**

The study was conducted using a qualitative approach, which can be seen as a strength as this approach allows for more detailed insight into what situations flow is experienced in because various experiences could be gathered from the free format of the open questions. Additionally, because this research study was focused on flourisher's accounts of flow, the gathered insights into flow activities can be used to point to certain habits and lifestyle aspects that are linked to flow and potentially to flourishing. This could open the door to further research, especially through causal studies, to explore the exact effects of the flow activities that were found and their potentially causal effects on flourishing, beyond the reported perceived effects of this study.

Furthermore, the sample for this study was more representative than others, as more age groups and different backgrounds were covered in comparison to prior studies with more specific respondents, like studies done on professional athletes and flow in that specific



domain or research on creative activities, specifically, among female cancer patients (Jackson, 1995; Reynolds & Prior, 2006).

In terms of the sample size for this study, 52 responses proved to be a big enough sample to reach data saturation, a common criterion for the adequacy of sample sizes in qualitative research (Guest et al., 2006). There were no new codes or prominent themes discovered during coding of the responses after the creation of the code book on the basis of 18 responses in total, of which 10 provided the subcodes for the first draft and 8 brought additional subcodes during test-coding by two independent coders. This study's data sample size was therefore big enough for the purpose of this study.

Nonetheless, a number of limitations need to be taken into account. Firstly, the sample's representativeness in terms of the variety of educational levels of the participants can be seen as questionable. More than half of the analysed responses came from people that obtained a secondary education degree, while only one fourth of participants were educated on a higher academic level. The exact labels for the education levels proved to be difficult to attribute to the actual level of knowledge, because the indication of a high school diploma, for example, as one's highest degree could be given by anyone that is yet to obtain vocational training, a Bachelor's degree or other diplomas. This means that a portion of people with a diploma that is not attributable to higher academic education could still be enrolled in academic education and there could therefore be a difference of unknown size between the backgrounds even within the same education level in the sample. Should the sample contain more students than the demographic data indicated, the study would be more representative of the average person, but since the measurement is not completely clear, this can only be assumed.

These two aspects combined make for uneven and unclear representation of the educational background, which hinders clear interpretation of the frequency of some flow activities that are more common among academics, for example those centred around science (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). For future research into flow activities, it could be aimed to have an even distribution of educational background within participant samples, or studies could focus more specifically on whether there are differences between the types of activities that induce flow, dependent on individuals with different educational levels.

For the coding, there was also only one rule in the codebook that gave a direction for interpretation when certain fragments were vague or not specific enough to be coded (see Appendix A). This rule could potentially be unclear for repeating researchers of this study, as other coder's interpretations may vary, and this could change the outcome to a certain extent.

Nonetheless, as this problem applies to qualitative research in general, the involved researchers took all measures to make the study at hand repeatable in all possible aspects and are confident that it is, as the excellent Kohen's Cappa also indicates. For the future, any researchers repeating this study should be trained to code their obtained data with the same understanding of the rules as it was done in this study.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study can be seen as a means of exploring the more detailed experiences of flow than those that have already been reported in previous research. It offered insights into more precise accounts of the phenomenon of flow and the way in which ordinary people experiencing ideal wellbeing view and comprehend the state of flow, compared to the type of select participants, like athletes and those suffering from health issues, that flow research was previously conducted with. This study's exploration is a step in the direction of a more concrete understanding of flow on its own, and with further research and more detailed exploration of the findings of this study in form of qualitative and quantitative studies, it could aid in forming a better understanding of the two defining concepts, flow and flourishing, for a fulfilling life.

## References

- ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH (2021). Atlas.ti 9 Windows [Computer software]. <https://atlasti.com/product/windows/>
- Burkewitz, J. (2014). *Coming to the Studio, Going with the Flow: A Study on Artmaking to Enhance Flourishing*. (Master's thesis, Florida State University).  
DigiNole. [http://purl.flvc.org/fsu/fd/FSU\\_migr\\_etd-8947](http://purl.flvc.org/fsu/fd/FSU_migr_etd-8947)
- Carli, M., Fave, A. D., & Massimini, F. (1988). The quality of experience in the flow channels: Comparison of Italian and U.S. students. *Cambridge University Press*, 288-306. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511621956.017>
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1996) *Creativity: Flow and the psychology of discovery and intervention*. Harper Collins.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). *Beyond boredom and anxiety*. Jossey-Bass.
- Csikszentmihalyi M., Abuhamdeh S., Nakamura J. (2014) Flow. *Flow and the Foundations of Positive Psychology*, 227-238.  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9088-8\\_15](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9088-8_15)
- Engeser S., Schiepe-Tiska A. (2012). Historical Lines and an Overview of Current Research on Flow. In Engeser, S. (Ed.), *Advances in Flow Research*. Springer.  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-2359-1\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-2359-1_1)
- Guest, G., Bruce, A., Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59-82.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903>
- Hart, E., & Di Blasi, Z. (2015). Combined flow in musical jam sessions: A pilot qualitative study. *Psychology of Music*, 43(2), 275-290.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735613502374>

- Jackson, S. A. (1995). Factors influencing the occurrence of flow state in elite athletes, *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 7(2), 138-166.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10413209508406962>
- Keller, J., Bless, H. (2008). Flow and regulatory compatibility: an experimental approach to the flow model of intrinsic motivation. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 34(2),196-209. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167207310026>
- Keyes, C. L. M. (2002). The Mental Health Continuum: From Languishing to Flourishing in Life. *Journal of Health and Social Research*, 43(2), 207-222. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3090197>
- Keyes, C. L. M. (2009). Brief description of the mental health continuum short form (MHC-SF). AACU. <https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/MHC-SFEnglish.pdf>
- Khaw, D., Kern, M. (2014). A cross-cultural comparison of the PERMA model of well-being. *Undergraduate Journal of Psychology at Berkeley, University of California*, 8(1), 10-23. [https://www.peggykern.org/uploads/5/6/6/7/56678211/khaw\\_\\_kern\\_2015\\_-\\_a\\_cross-cultural\\_comparison\\_of\\_the\\_perma\\_model\\_of\\_well\\_being.pdf](https://www.peggykern.org/uploads/5/6/6/7/56678211/khaw__kern_2015_-_a_cross-cultural_comparison_of_the_perma_model_of_well_being.pdf)
- Lamers, S. M. A., Westerhof, G. J., Bohlmeijer, E. T., ten Klooster, P. M., & Keyes, C. L. M. (2011). Evaluating the Psychometric Properties of the Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF). *Journal of clinical psychology*, 67(1), 99-110.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20741>
- Nakamura, J., Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2014). The Concept of Flow. In: Flow and the Foundations of Positive Psychology. *Flow and the Foundations of Positive Psychology*, 239-263. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9088-8\\_16](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9088-8_16)
- Reynolds, F., Prior, S. (2006). Creative Adventures and Flow in Art-Making: A Qualitative Study of Women Living with Cancer. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 255- 262. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F030802260606900603>

- Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well being*. Simon & Schuster.
- Stander, F. W. (2015). *Entering the zone: a positive psychological framework for athlete flow and flourishing*. (Publication No. 3333) [Doctoral dissertation, North-West University]. Boloka Institution Repository.
- Vella, K., Johnson, D. (2012). Flourishing and video games. *Proceedings of the 8<sup>th</sup> Australasian Conference on Interactive Entertainment: Playing the System*, 19, 1-3. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2336727.2336746>
- Vittersø, J. (2003). Flow Versus Life Satisfaction: A Projective Use of Cartoons to Illustrate the Difference Between the Evaluation Approach and the Intrinsic Motivation Approach to Subjective Quality of Life. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 4, 141–167. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1024413112234>
- Williams, M., Moser, T. (2019). The Art of Coding and Thematic Exploration in Qualitative Research. *International Management Review*, 15(1), 45-55. *Semantic Scholar*. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-Art-of-Coding-and-Thematic-Exploration-in-Williams-Moser/c0a0c26ac41cb8beb337834e6c1e2f35b91d071d>

## Appendix A

### Flourishing individuals & flow: Codebook

#### Coding Rules

- The subcodes with the prefixes 1.X, 2.1.X and 2.2.X are used for coding, the main codes act as summarizing categories for the sub-codes. Their frequency is calculated from their subcodes' summed frequencies.
- Each subcode can be used for coding once per response.
- One coded fragment can be as short as one word or as long as a few sentences.
- A single fragment can be coded by multiple different sub-codes simultaneously.
- A fragment can only be coded with a code if the code or the meaning of the code, as per its definition, is clearly mentioned. A formulation that only leads to assumption of the fit for a certain code is not sufficient for coding.

#### Coding Scheme

Category code		Code	Definition
<b>Main code</b> <b>1:</b> Experiences of flow			Activities and situations during or after which the respondent notices their state of "flow".
		<i>Subcode 1.1:</i> Art	The act of painting, doodling, photographing, filming, editing or any other form of individually creating art, as well as observing or learning about art. Art is defined as all visual arts, namely physical art pieces, photography, motion picture art.

		<i>Subcode 1.2:</i> Music	The act of listening to and learning about music in all forms, as well as creating and playing it individually with instruments, vocals, or other elements.
		<i>Subcode 1.3:</i> Physical activity	The act of engaging in physical activity of any kind.
		<i>Subcode 1.4:</i> Literature	The act of writing or actively working on, as well as reading or learning about literature.
		<i>Subcode 1.5:</i> Science	The act of engaging in or learning about science.
		<i>Subcode 1.6:</i> Hobbies	The act of engaging in pass-time activities that are of a nature not fitting under subcode 1.1-1.5 but are done for personal pleasure and enjoyment in one's free time.
		<i>Subcode 1.7:</i> Social interaction	The act of engaging in social contact with other people.
		<i>Subcode 1.8:</i> Romantic relationships	The relationship with a significant romantic partner and the activities, emotions and thoughts associated with that.
		<i>Subcode 1.9:</i> Solitude	Being alone or acting by oneself, even if in the presence of other people.

		<i>Subcode 1.10:</i> Solving problems	The act of overcoming obstacles during activities.
		<i>Subcode 1.11:</i> Spirituality	Engagement in spiritual (meaning religious and other orientations) rituals
		<i>Subcode 1.12:</i> Nature	The act of observing and spending time in nature.
		<i>Subcode 1.13:</i> Working towards a goal	The act of engaging in activities or doing work that is oriented at a pre-set goal that is to be reached.
		<i>Subcode 1.14:</i> Gaining knowledge	The act of actively studying and learning new things, regardless of the topic or setting.
		<i>Subcode 1.15:</i> Occupation	The engagement in one's occupational activities, regardless of the kind of work that is being done and the field of the occupation.
<b>Main code 2:</b> Perceived effect of flow on mental wellbeing			The respondent's personal account of how experiencing flow affects their overall mental health and wellbeing.



	<p><b>Main code</b> <b>2.1:</b></p> <p>Perceived positive effect on mental wellbeing</p>		<p>The respondent's personal evaluation of flow to positively contribute to their mental health and wellbeing.</p>
		<p><i>Subcode 2.1.1:</i></p> <p>Mental relief</p>	<p>Being relieved of otherwise present stress, worries and personal problems due to the experience of flow.</p>
		<p><i>Subcode 2.1.2:</i></p> <p>Neglecting personal and bodily needs</p>	<p>Being so caught up in flow, most likely for a prolonged period of time, that personal needs are neglected, for example hygiene, rest, stress relief, nutrition, relaxation.</p>
		<p><i>Subcode 2.1.3:</i></p> <p>Mood improvement</p>	<p>The respondent's own account of an elevated mood and increased happiness.</p>
		<p><i>Subcode 2.1.4:</i></p> <p>Increased self-appreciation</p>	<p>The respondent's own account of an increased self-esteem and sense of value of themselves, often through a sense of productivity, competence or other positive attributes about themselves that the flow state stimulated.</p>
	<p><b>Main code</b> <b>2.2:</b></p> <p>Perceived negative</p>		<p>The respondent's personal evaluation of flow to negatively contribute to their mental health and wellbeing.</p>

	effect on mental wellbeing		
		<i>Subcode 2.2.1:</i> Mental stress	Being increasingly stressed and mentally strained as a result of being in the state of flow.
		<i>Subcode 2.2.2:</i> Encouraging personal and bodily needs	Being stimulated to keep up good habits and take care of oneself through the state of flow.
		<i>Subcode 2.2.3:</i> Mood decline	The respondent's own account of a worsened mood and decreased happiness or even feeling depressed.
		<i>Subcode 2.2.4:</i> Decline of self- appreciation	The respondent's own account of a decline in their self-esteem and sense of value of themselves, often through a sense of lessened productivity, decreased abilities or other negative attributes about themselves that the flow state stimulated.

**Appendix B****Mental Health Continuum – Short Form (MHC-SF)****English**

During the past month, how often did you feel ...	NEVER	ONCE OR TWICE	ABOUT ONCE A WEEK	ABOUT 2 OR 3 TIMES A WEEK	ALMOST EVERY DAY	EVERY DAY
1. happy						
2. interested in life						
3. satisfied with life						
4. that you had something important to contribute to society						
5. that you belonged to a community (like a social group, or your neighborhood)						
6. that our society is a good place, or is becoming a better place, for all people						
7. that people are basically good						
8. that the way our society works makes sense to you						
9. that you liked most parts of your personality						
10. good at managing the responsibilities of your daily life						
11. that you had warm and trusting relationships with others						
12. that you had experiences that challenged you to grow and become a better person						

13. confident to think or express your own ideas and opinions						
14. that your life has a sense of direction or meaning to it						

### German

Im letzten Monat, wie oft hatten Sie das Gefühl,	NIE	1-2 MAL IM MONAT	1 MAL IN DER WOCHE	2-3 MAL IN DER WOCHE	FAST TÄGLICH	TÄGLICH
1. dass Sie glücklich waren?						
2. dass Sie Interesse am Leben hatten?						
3. dass Sie zufrieden waren?						
4. dass Sie einen wichtigen gesellschaftlichen Beitrag geleistet haben?						
5. dass Sie zu einer Gemeinschaft gehörten (z.B. einer sozialen Gruppe, Ihrer Nachbarschaft oder Ihrer Stadt)?						
6. dass unsere Gesellschaft besser für Ihre Bürger wird?						
7. dass Menschen von Natur aus gut sind?						
8. dass Sie verstehen, wie unsere Gesellschaft funktioniert?						
9. dass Sie die meisten Aspekte Ihrer Persönlichkeit wertschätzen?						
10. dass Sie Ihre täglichen Aufgaben und Verpflichtungen gut erfüllen konnten?						

11. dass Sie warme und vertraute Beziehungen zu anderen haben?						
12. dass Sie sich entwickeln oder ein besserer Mensch werden?						
13. dass Sie selbstbewusst Ihre eigenen Ideen und Gedanken gedacht und geäußert haben?						
14. dass Ihr Leben Richtung und Sinn hat.						