

Living With Intention | February 2, 2005
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Greetings,

Welcome to the second issue of *Living With Intention*—a monthly ezine designed to help you create a wildly fulfilling and remarkably successful life on your own terms. Thank you for sharing this resource with your family and friends...

I've been honored that you liked this publication enough to spread the word. Please continue to do so! If you're reading *Living With Intention* for the first time, welcome. We invite you to subscribe today at <http://www.appliedinsight.net/subscribe.html>.

This issue introduces the concept of *Flow*—another topic in a series of articles to help you live a life of *authentic happiness*. Our second feature article serves up *powerful practices* that can make an immediate difference in your outlook and your life.



Check out our resources section for information to take your learning and life experience to the next level. I'm especially excited to invite you to attend the **Pause and Play Getaway: A Weekend of Fun and Friendship April 22-24, 2005 in Coeur d' Alene, Idaho**. This is an event you won't want to miss. Visit www.pauseandplaygetaway.com for more details.

And be sure to check out the great ways two woman business owners are helping women thrive.

Wishing you an amazing launch into 2005! Happy reading.



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Ideas for a Wildly Fulfilling Life...
On the Road to Authentic Happiness: Finding Flow

I've developed a rather unorthodox theory about why we've been seeing a rise in anxiety rates in recent decades. Although my theory isn't yet proven, I'm convinced that anxiety must somehow be related to the interior design practices of the 1970s. Argue all you want but I think the evidence speaks for itself. Fortunately, there's a remedy in the form of today's

topic—"Flow." Let me explain.

In 1996 I bought my first home, a mid-1970s Brady-esque number—a highly unlikely choice for my Victorian-style inclinations. But it had been foreclosed on and left vacant for years (due in large part, I'm sure, to the décor), which was the only reason a home in this wonderful neighborhood was in any way affordable. So I figured I could hunker down, invest a little sweat equity, and somehow make the place livable.

As I strode through my new abode, I started questioning my sanity (a practice I've since become well acquainted with). I walked room to room feeling alternately like I was in a fun house and in some psychedelic dream from a long-forgotten 60's rock band. I stood awestruck by the splashes of vivid orange and lemon yellow complemented by a deep-pile rust-colored shag carpet. Light fixtures were ornate relics of amber glass that cast a sickly, depressing glow in every room.

It was enough to make your brain ache and your thoughts spin desperately out of control in a carnival ride of hopeless desperation (hence my theory of the relationship between home décor and anxiety). You could tell that the previous owners had begun an ill-fated process of updating some of the rooms, with certain walls washed in delicate lilac or seafoam green that sadly merged into another pool of that unforgettable rust-colored carpet. It was Martha Stewart meets Rod Stewart and Saturday Night Fever meets Scarlet Fever. Almost indescribable.

So, with the help of family and friends, I jumped into the redecorating process to make the space more tolerable. I threw myself into the demolition of this psychologically-scarring environment, ready to create a healthy new vibrant space (which I'm sure is precisely what the previous owners had done some 20 years prior and I'm sure owners 20 years from now will do to my best efforts here).

Mind you, I had no idea what I was doing, a fact still painfully evident in a few of the rooms, but I had conviction, a vision, and a boatload of spackle just begging to be used. I spent hours steaming hundreds of feet of luxurious (and hideous) wall paper and painstakingly peeling it off the walls. This was quite a feat since it was adhered using what I guessed was a combination of super glue, roof tar, and dried oatmeal. I grabbed a chisel and hammer and one by one chipped four levels of bright orange starburst tile backsplash off of the kitchen walls. I layered coat after coat after coat after coat (get the picture?) of white paint over the tell-tale 70's chocolate brown cupboards because I couldn't afford new ones.

And, each day, after all of the manual labor was done, I'd feel totally spent and high as a kite. "From the paint fumes and adhesive from hell," you're saying to yourself. I reply, "I think not, my friend." This feeling of being on top of the world, of being "in the zone," was actually the result of a heightened physical and emotional state that researchers and psychology gurus call "Flow."

Flow is a cool principle. It's the same space that athletes get into when they're at the peak of their performance, and the same state that artists experience when they're creating a masterpiece. It's the way you feel when you're so absorbed in what you're doing that you lose all track of time, space, and conscious thought.

In his book *Finding Flow*, positive psychology expert Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (say that one three times fast!) describes Flow states as "moments of effortless action" and immersion in what's in front of you. What's great is that you can learn to trigger Flow in many situations... not just doing the things that you're brilliant at or the typical things that you might associate with peak experience (like those listed above), but by creating extraordinary experiences amidst the ordinary activities of daily life, as I did with the renovation of my home.

Csikszentmihalyi says that a person can trigger a Flow experiences when she:

- Faces challenges that are significant and meaningful,
- Uses skills that are "just about adequate" to meet the challenge (success is likely but not certain), and,
- Can gain immediate feedback on status or progress towards meeting the challenge.

Flow is about stretching yourself to a heightened level of experience. It's about using your skills, gifts, and will to experience something more fully or achieve something remarkable.

It's about being fully engaged in the present moment and using it to your advantage.

That means Flow can be experienced almost anywhere, any time: during work projects, interacting with your family or friends, practicing a hobby, mastering a new skill, engaging in a spiritual practice, helping others, learning new information, taking care of your health, or even (surprise, surprise), completing household projects.

The key is that Flow takes energy and effort—it requires using your skills and it only happens in the pursuit of worthwhile activities. It *does not* occur by mindlessly watching television, surfing the net, or just “hanging out” with no purposeful interaction with others or life.

That doesn't mean these things are off limits, it only means that too much of them will decrease your chances of achieving Flow regularly, and subsequently will hinder your chances for a much richer, more fulfilling existence.

So how do you enhance your chances for experiencing Flow? It's simple...just look for more opportunities to set the stage for Flow:

1. Regularly look for challenges that will stretch you but not overwhelm you;
2. Use your skills and concerted effort to meet those challenges;
3. Pay attention to your progress along the way; and
4. Cut down on “anti-Flow” activities like too much television or net surfing.

When things in life seem to be slow-going, it's time for some Flow-going. Remember, Flow can be found in the most unlikely of places. For me, that was in an anxiety-producing Brady-esque fun house. Where will it be for you?

Ideas for A Remarkably Successful Life... Powerful Practices that Make a Difference

I've stumbled across a smattering of research studies and quotes lately that made me think about how a few simple but powerful practices can make a marked difference in our quality of life. Here are four ways you can change your life experience and spark success today:

✓ **The Power of Words.** An MIT study found that one negative comment is sixteen times more powerful than one positive comment. Think about the impact that has on your self-concept, your family relationships, and your professional practices. When in doubt, choose positive words to achieve outstanding outcomes.

✓ **The Power of Priorities.** I recently read an interview with the host of a popular news program. The woman was asked about how she balanced a rigorous career and fulfilling personal life. She noted that we're all juggling a lot and most people are often afraid of “dropping the ball.” She said that when things get tough, she tries to remember that there are glass balls and rubber balls.

The rubber balls bounce when you drop them—it might not be desirable, but you can pick them up later and still be ok. The glass balls (your family, health, values, etc.) are the glass balls—when you drop them, they can easily break. Decide which balls in your life are your rubber balls and which are your glass balls. Then focus your greatest attention and care on the glass ones.

✓ **The Power of Intent.** Mother Teresa was once asked to march against war. She politely declined, saying “I will not march against war, but I will march for peace.” This distinction is an important one...know what you stand for and what your intent is in the world. It is more intrinsically motivating and effective to move *towards* something you value and support than to work *against* something that you dislike or disagree with. Find what you will

march FOR and there will be less of a need to march AGAINST anything.

✓ **The Power of Mindset.** A news anchor once interviewed Christopher Reeve about the accident that left him paralyzed and how it had impacted his life. He was asked “does it bother you that you are now paralyzed and can’t do many of the things you once could?” His response was simple and elegant. He said, “It doesn’t bother me to be paralyzed. What frustrates me is seeing physically able people paralyzed in their minds by fear.” We all have a choice—to succumb to fear and discomfort or to honor our fear but then to act anyway and lead the life we were destined to lead. Which will you choose?

Resources That Will Change Your Life

Books

- *Finding Flow* by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. A comprehensive but infinitely readable overview of the power of Flow—what causes it, why it works, how it impacts people’s lives. This book combines outstanding research and observations with great examples of how Flow can make a difference in your day to day existence and long-term happiness.
- *The Breakout Principle* by Herbert Benson and William Proctor. A wonderful resource for learning how to trigger Flow states when you really need them. Benson is a pioneer in the field of mind-body health and has outlined simple ways to transform challenge into a heightened state of health, productivity, and creativity.

Purchase these books through **Amazon** | [Here](#)

Purchase these books through **Barnes & Noble** | [Here](#)

Events

Pause and Play Getaway: A Weekend of Fun and Friendship.

Join us for an unforgettable weekend at the Coeur d’ Alene Resort in Coeur d’ Alene, Idaho April 22-24, 2005. From laughter to learning to relaxation to connection...you decide. Do as much or as little as you’d like. Give yourself or someone you love the gifts of time, fun, and friendship. For details and a chance to win a free gift certificate, log on to www.pauseandplaygetaway.com.

Women Making a Difference... Resources to Help Women Thrive

This month’s recommendations offer two unique brands of inspiration. Remember, these are not paid advertisements...they’re just great resources that I think make a difference for women!

Linspirations: Art that Inspires

By Lynn Colwell, www.bloomngrow.net

Lynn designs gorgeous handmade paper-covered magnetic boards that hold photos, quotes, or inspirational phrases. These babies are works of art—I have one in my office and my clients just love it. Each 9” x 12” light-weight board has a wire for hanging, is individually designed and crafted with an inspirational word, phrase, or quote and comes with at least two designer magnets for attaching photos or additional phrases.

A perfect gift for yourself or someone you care about! For examples, just click on the following link: <http://www.bloomngrow.net/page/page/1113343.htm>.

Sprouts Inspirational Cards

By Karen Wright, www.wrightminded.com

Karen has compiled two sets of 52 beautiful laminated cards that provide constant motivation and food for thought throughout the year. These cards are a great way to give yourself a dose of inspiration or to spark creative thinking and new insight. We have a set in our waiting room and people are constantly shuffling through them. Each card contains a quote of wisdom specifically chosen to inspire a new understanding of life and humanity.

The cards are displayed on a gold metal easel for easy reading and presented in a white gift box ready for giving. Sneak a peak at these great cards at <http://www.wrightminded.com/products.html>.

Karen is offering readers of *Living With Intention* a 20% discount on the purchase of these products. Simply email her at karen@wrightminded.com for more details.

All the best,



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Published by Deanna Davis, PhD, co-owner of Applied Insight. Deanna is a life and business coach, professional speaker and writer who helps people design wildly fulfilling and remarkably successful lives - on their own terms. Deanna is an admitted laughaholic and a strong proponent of adding chocolate as a key component of the USDA Food Pyramid. For information about her professional speaking and coaching services, contact Deanna at deanna@appliedinsight.net

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