

## Optimizing the Experience of Flow for Adults With Aphasia A Focus on Environmental Factors

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Flow has been described as positive experiences of intense concentration, distorted time passage, and a loss of self-consciousness that result from matching task difficulty to a person's skill level. It has been studied in many different populations and has been associated with a number of positive outcomes, including improved life satisfaction and well-being, enhancement of identity, and the development of skills. Although flow has been identified as being important for adults with aphasia, it had not been studied in this population until recently. In this article, the authors describe the concept of flow and explain why it is important for clinicians to consider when working with adults with aphasia. Next, the authors review the literature related to barriers and facilitators that influence the experience of flow for adults with aphasia and conclude by identifying clinical implications for optimizing the experience of flow in this population. **Key words:** *aphasia, barriers, engagement, environmental factors, facilitators, flow, participation, stroke*

**T**HERE are times in people's lives when they are so absorbed in what they are

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The FlowAphasia app, discussed in this article and designed by the first author, is not currently commercially available. However, it is intended that this app will be commercially available in the future.

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doing that they lose track of time, yet still sense that they are in control. On occasions characterized as flow, the task at hand is difficult, but manageable with effort and concentration. Upon accomplishing the task—be it a morning swim, a stimulating discussion with friends, or a challenging home improvement project—there is a sense of accomplishment, and that sense of accomplishment is motivating. Time passes differently and people become less aware of the environment around them. There is a feeling of challenge without being overwhelmed.

These optimal experiences were described and labeled originally as “flow” by Csikszentmihalyi (1975). Flow can occur when the challenge matches a person's abilities, regardless of the individual's skill level (Lyon, 2000). As one research participant with aphasia explained, “Well, there's times when you don't even think of what aphasia is” (Sather, 2015). That is, the participant described a time when she was so consumed in a task that she was not thinking about her own communication difficulties. Perhaps flow has implications for people with aphasia that can lower barriers to participation.

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## Optimizing the Experience of Flow for Adults with Aphasia by Reducing Barriers and Enhancing Facilitators

### Topics in Language Disorders

Flow has been described as positive experiences of intense concentration, distorted time passage, and a loss of self-consciousness that result from matching task difficulty to a person's skill level. Flow has been associated with a number of positive outcomes, including improved life satisfaction and well-being, enhancement of identity, and skill development. The authors describe the concept of flow and explain why it is important for clinicians to consider when working with adults with aphasia. Barriers and facilitators to flow among adults with aphasia are discussed, and clinical implications for optimizing the experience of flow in this population are identified.