

Get Into the Flow

By Sara Hurd, CFCC

Have you ever considered the concept of flow? Have you ever said, "it just seemed to flow"? That word seems to have an ease about it that is definitely appealing. For me, it brings to mind the flow of a stream. Even when there are obstacles, the water just flows effortlessly over them.



How do your days flow? In a coaching call with a client recently, we began talking about the flow of her days. How might the ideal day "flow"? We have natural ups and downs in our energy; consider what activities take advantage of our natural energy flow so it feels like things are happening with ease rather than feeling like we're fighting it all day long. In addition, sometimes we can shape our little stream towards a specific purpose by inserting decorative stones here and there.

Have you ever noticed how some conversations just flow? What causes that? In my experience, that tends to happen when you are genuinely curious and interested in what the other person has to say. You naturally ask questions that are free from judgment or criticism, and things that you'd like to share about the topic at hand naturally come into your mind as well. You listen. They listen. You don't hold information back that could benefit the other person or your understanding of one another. There's a natural flow of dialogue, or shared meaning. So what's your part in this? How can you create more flow in your conversations?

What about the flow of your thoughts? Do you find yourself struggling for creative ideas? Does your brain present chaos rather than valuable ideas that rise to the surface? Are you able to access your intuition, or is your brain so busy that it doesn't pay attention?

This is what helps me. If I can capture the mundane somewhere else so I don't need to carry it in my brain (a handy PDA that I keep with me does the trick), my brain is free to generate or bring from its stored information valuable information that will help me. Most of the time it's important that I'm ready to write down ideas as they come to me. Other times, I can clearly remember an idea because its impression was strong.

It's also important for me to take moments in the day to pause and take a step back from all the activity. That helps me to clear some mental RAM so my "computer" does not run so sluggishly. It also gives me space for my intuition and for idea play.

Where is the bottleneck in your projects? Whether you work with a project team or on your own, do your projects naturally flow from beginning to end? One mistake we sometimes make with projects is not learning from them. If we're not aware of where the projects naturally flow or where they get bottlenecked, we can't do anything to fix it.

Take a moment to consider project patterns: where do your projects tend to get bogged down? At what points do you struggle to keep the flow going? What can you learn from that pattern for your current and future projects? Build in some measures to foster flow or to prevent bottlenecks.

Does STUFF easily flow around you? I have to admit that this is where I'm probably the most challenged. A friend and colleague recently did an astrological reading for me on my birthday. One message I received was that I need to watch accumulation because it could become a millstone around my neck. My downfall is not necessarily physical stuff, but virtual information. I have tons of things stored on my hard drive, great information that I've meant to get back to and use, but just haven't done it. An extension of that is my books... I've got tons of books that I haven't yet read. I'm sure you can relate - there's more information out there than we can ever go through in our lifetimes.

I remember a coaching session years ago when a client and I were talking about newspapers. That was one factor in the clutter that she was trying hard to get rid of. It occurred to me to draw the analogy between a newspaper and a houseguest. Its stay is supposed to be temporary. Yet sometimes we invite it in and unless we have a preconceived idea how long it will stay and the nature of its departure, it can overstay its welcome and we can begin to feel overwhelmed and resentful.

The same can be true of just about everything we accumulate. Some things stay longer than others, but there is little that needs to stick around indefinitely. If we don't have an idea of how long it will stay and how we'll help it on its way to the next stage of its useful existence (nothing is happy sitting there and gathering dust), our homes and offices begin to feel (and perhaps smell) like a stagnant bog.

What happens when there's no flow? Ever visit The Great Salt Lake?

Have you ever thought about what happens to a body of water when there is no flow out? Perhaps we Utah residents have more than most, because we have a large and smelly example right here in our beautiful state. Water is deposited by three rivers, but no river flows out of it to the sea. Nothing can live in the Lake except brine shrimp, and although one interesting phenomenon is that it's impossible to sink in the water because of the high salt content, hardly anyone goes there. I have a childhood memory of the aftermath of my only visit to the Great Salt Lake, but no memory of the actual event: I was sitting in the bathtub trying to wash off the gritty salt and trying not to itch my hundred-or-so mosquito bites. Although I'm gratified that I can say I've actually been in The Great Salt Lake, that experience didn't exactly make me want to go back.

I'm not going to force a parallel upon you; I'd like you to draw your own. So here's the question I'd like you to answer: is there anything in your life that has become like The Great Salt Lake for lack of flow? How did that happen and what are you going to do about it?

And now, it's time to go apply my own advice. After all, I'd rather be the happy little stream than the smelly saltwater lake.

Sara Hurd, the WAHM! Coach, helps Work-At-Home Moms generate income at home while keeping family first. She is a Charter Mentor of Women's Support TEAM, as the Joyful Self-Management for WAHMs Mentor. She is a BSW, Certified Franklin Covey Coach (CFCC), Certified Self-Management Coach (CSMC) and graduate of Legacy Learning Coach Training, and has been a coach and coach trainer for Franklin Covey Coaching / Professional Education Institute since 1998. In 2003, Sara founded Keyway Strategies LLC, a coaching company specializing in helping small business owners grow their businesses, navigate a sea of technological tools, and create healthy relationships with themselves, others and their businesses. www.keywaystrategies.com She cherishes her time with dreamboat Paul, preschooler Roseanna and baby Sally and works from her home office in rural Plain City, Utah. **Sign up for Sara's free ezine at www.wahmcoach.com.**