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## **Staying in the Flow: Slow Down to Move Forward**

**By Jane Faulkner**

Featured Columnist

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*Flow with whatever is happening and let your mind be free. Stay centered by accepting whatever you are doing. This is the ultimate.*

*--Chuang Tzu*

How do you find your own satisfying and fulfilling way to work and live?

We want the most from our careers and lives. We set goals and methodically pursue them—often with success, but not always with ease or without stress. When we fall short of the mark, or find that reaching a goal does not produce satisfaction, what then?

Take a moment and step back. When you spend a lot of time “in your head”—analyzing, synthesizing and solving problems—you might find you're less fluid with your creative-intuitive knowing.

Harvard neuroscientist Jill Bolte Taylor, experienced “nirvana” when she lost the use of the left side of her brain during a stroke. Her new book is called *My Stroke of Insight*. (See the interview at <http://www.ted.com/talks/view/id/229>.) Yet our logical side can complement our creative side. The word “logic” is defined as the “art of reasoning,” and “the relationship of element to element to whole.” True logic is holistic, not one-sided, not fear- or control-based.

By leading from your creative-intuitive side, balanced with the logical side, you can set goals and take actions that are aligned with your values and will create personal fulfillment. And, you won't have to “work” to achieve your goals. When you are “in the flow,” your “work” will feel like inspired action, or even joyful play. Like a river that always runs, flow is effortless. How do you know when you're not in

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the flow, or perhaps even going against the flow? Your body always knows, so your feelings are often guideposts.

Let me offer a road map.

1. Take charge of knowing what you want.

Tune into the knowing part of you—I call this your “gut” or feeling sense. What does that part of you really want?

Imagine a moment in time when you have what you want, then step into the scene. Where are you? Who are you with and what are you doing? Imagine every sensory detail of the scene and experience it all. Does your energy increase when you envision the scene? Does the scene fulfill your current values? What do you have to give up to get what you want? How will you know when you have what you want? Why is it important to you?

2. Write it down. Let it go.

Once you know what you want, write it down in detail and then let go of the outcome. A paradox perhaps, but by letting go of attachment to the outcome, you actually make room for it, or something better, to show up. If you hold on to what you think you want with a tight fist, you won't have an open palm free to receive what shows up.

3. Live in the present rather than the future.

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If you try to control the future, you are playing mind games: Life only exists in the present. You are just considering the next right action. You will find that being present with and not resisting “difficult” circumstances allows you to learn what you need to and then move on.

#### 4. Listen inside.

So how do you know the next right step? Once you are clear about what you want, take the time to notice your feelings, and to listen inside, especially to your Being part—the deepest truth of who you are, where your core values live. When you do this, you will receive internal guidance that points you to some sort of inspired action. If an action is “inspired” (meaning “spirit into”), it will ultimately bring you peace and joy, not sap your energy. When your energy is drained, when you think that you have to “make it happen,” or your actions feel like “work,” your logical mind is probably running the show. You are in resistance. If you just slow down and release resistance, there will be an easier way. Your mind is a great support once you know the next step.

#### 5. Plan based on inspired action.

This is where your logical mind is invaluable. You can create a plan based on what you are inspired to do. The strength of the left side of your brain is to collect, organize and synthesize data. By working with it as you would your computer or any other tool to complement your creative-intuitive knowing, you will find balance and structure to implement the inspired.

When you stay in the flow of the river, life is magical. When fear takes over, you may find yourself entangled with branches and rocks, but the simple act of letting go will bring you back into the current of the river.

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