



## Episode 4: Got Flow Mo?

Welcome to Crux the podcast about big pivots beautiful diversions and essential truths of life. And of course, circus. I'm Jessica John, I was a CIA analyst with the pinnacle of my career, fell in love with being upside down. So I'm asking friends and experts, and sometimes myself to share knowledge and tools about how they are finding their way through movement, through business, and through life. All right, let's get to the F-ing point.

Hello, welcome back. I say Welcome back. I mean, welcome me back to this podcast.

I've been a little busy lately. And I've had quite a few things on my plate. And one of them is something that is the topic of today's episode, which is flow. I am hosting a summit of over 25 speakers. This next week, June 22, through 24th. It's a virtual Summit. And I'm bringing a bunch of people that I'm just excited to hear from some of my favorite voices in the pole and aerial spaces, and a few other spaces as well.

bringing everyone together to have a real dialogue around flow.

And I, I thought today, since I have so many ideas and thoughts floating around in my own head, that I would just riff a little on some of those thoughts I have in front of me a whiteboard,

by the way whiteboard, is it whiteboard, or whiteboard? I don't know, whiteboard in front of me. And it has all of these notes scribbled from conversations that I've had with the speakers. And it is a big hot mess.

But I'm going to pull out some of the things that are written here

and talk about them a little bit, because I

am really excited about these topics for a lot of different reasons. So let's, let's back some, let's go back to Jessica of 2023.

For some reason, I got it in my head that I wanted to do a summit.

And

part of what appealed to me about a summit was exposing my audience to new voices. I feel like we can so often get in this echo chamber chamber, and not really stopped to examine why we think what we think.

And I noticed that so much on Instagram.

I'll say something to a group of people. And then I kind of see the idea being replicated everywhere else. And I'm not saying it's just me that people are following me like that. I'm saying that we we all do it.

What I'm saying is

replicating things that I've heard elsewhere, and I don't even recognize that I'm doing it. And so it's happening all the time. We don't know where our ideas actually even come from, but sometimes they're so deeply held. And they really form the basis of our understanding of how we move, why we move and what we want to get out of our practice. So

I wanted to bring people together to have a conversation around something.

And

I wasn't sure what that something was going to be.

What I did know is that

I had a group of people in mind,

who had a lot of thoughts, could speak with great expertise, and really dive deep into lots of different topics. These are smart people.

And the intellectual side of my brain loves digging deep.

So first off, I

picked people that I wanted to dig deep with.

And when I started to assemble a list over a period of months, something emerged from the people that I wanted to hear from.

That was practice. Right? These are all people who have different ideas about how to practice.

Most of them have those ideas based in a very, very long developed personal practice. And what they teach is based on those lessons and a ton of outside inquiry.

So we had practice.

And the types of practice while everyone

in the group that I had assembled, at least at that point, were either aerialists, pole dancers, or in the I would say, mindset, life coach space.

And

some had specialties, from strength and conditioning, some had specialties from mobility and fascia.

Some had dug really deep into proprioception interoception.

Some had dance backgrounds, some didn't. Some had somatic backgrounds, some didn't.

So we had a lot of diversity around

the types of practice that people were doing, but all working for the most part toward a goal of aerial and pole.

And, again, because these are people that have dug deep

the understanding of these concepts and how they fit into the hole are also very well developed.

So when I thought about what each of these speakers had to bring to the table,

really what they were doing, is helping people to develop a part of their practice, that was going to lead them to more personal fulfillment in their practice, right, not just training. For a skill acquisition goal for the sake of having a cool skill, all that stuff is great. But there was something more to each of what the speakers had to contribute. And that was greater fulfillment,

more sense of

personal control and satisfaction and pleasure.

And all of those things.

Were in some way related to this concept of flow.

And so now, again, I have to do a little bit of a rewind.

Because when flow kept coming up, in looking at what everyone who I wanted to talk to you had to offer,

I had a little bit of

a moment.

And why did I have a moment? Well, I remember maybe three or four years ago,

making a post on Instagram, about how much I hated the workflow, like, hate it.

And I made the post. Actually, I'm not even sure exactly what it said at this point. But it was really just a visceral reaction to the word flow. And I didn't stop to take a lot of time to dissect why that was the case.

So now I'm thinking of making a summit all about the word flow.

And I had a gut reaction. First the gut reaction was how, like,

hypocritical

like how on earth Jessica, can you make a summit about something that you in recent history

I said you didn't even like.

So before I got a little deeper into this, I had to figure out what it is that made me feel that way.

And

for me,

that visceral reaction that I had

was about the way that the Word Flow is used.

So it wasn't about

the dictionary definitions, if you look up flow today,

it wasn't about the idea of flow state, and altered states.

It was

what I perceived as a misuse of the word.

And notice that was in past tense. At that time, I perceived it as a misuse of the word.

Because I felt like

what was happening two things. One, there was

a lack of appreciation for technique

that

people used flow in a way to give themselves permission

to not train

for skills.

Now, that that

little pause there,

that in and of itself is problematic, a few on a few levels, because first of all, you don't have to train for skills, I strongly believe that.

But

it was sort of a cop out, as far as

not taking the time to understand the value of, of just moving, right. And then there was this whole other side of it, which was that people were using the word flow

to mean sequencing, when I interpreted the word to mean flow state.

Or they interpreted the word to mean sequencing when I interpreted the word to mean improvisation.

And so there was a disconnect between these two words.

So

the more that I thought about all of this,

the more that I realized that

the way that we were using these words, flow, and then later fluidity

are just different. Right? They are different definitions of the same work.

We meant completely different things. And there was a disconnect, right? If someone said the word flow to me, I assumed they meant one thing, but they actually meant something quite different.

And that disconnect for me was jarring. And, in retrospect,

I would gather that the other side of the equation is true as well, if you have known flow to mean sequencing, or fluid transitions, and then someone is talking all about

attentional focus and flow state,

getting all nerdy in the research, you're like, What is this? I just want to look pretty, right.

So

in recognizing that what we were talking about were two very different things, but two very different related things.

I thought that the summit that I was actually interested in creating and having discussions with all of these amazing people was around the myths

that we have ideas about what flow is, who has access to it, who deserves it,

and who doesn't.

And by having deeper conversation about

For the definitions, and the pieces that make up

both flow and fluid movement

that we can give people

more to be able to access these things in their own training, that they won't feel like they have to write these things off. Because they're not for them. That flow really is for everybody. And that it's something that if you integrate in your practice, it can really help everybody.

And the way that you choose to do it, and the way that you choose to integrate it, and the importance that it takes up in your life, is going to be different for everyone. And that's okay.

But

if we're not exposed to this, if we don't have these conversations, you don't know what you're missing in your practice.

So that's a little bit of the backstory behind unraveling the myth of flow, that is the name that I

ended up upon.

And

with this myth busting premise,

it really does allow

lots of different coaches to take what they know really well. And provide specific tools that people can use, and integrate right away in their practice to start seeing either improvements and how they feel or how they look. Because those choices are yours to make about what you want to get out of your practice.

The

flow state side of things

I find really fascinating. And the more research that I do myself, the more I want to dig in.

And I think that

some of the things that I've found the most interesting

have to do

with the way that we use music.

I'm not going to talk too much about the literature here, because I don't actually have the studies in front of me. Again, I'm just speaking off of my whiteboard.

But if we think about the freestyle classes, whether in aerial or pole, music plays such a big role.

If I think to some of the freestyle teachers that I know and respect, they spend so much time focusing on creating playlists.

And

because I didn't understand this so well, I often wondered why that was, why that was so important to the instructors.

I thought that perhaps it was just about creating the right vibe.

And I didn't understand how important it was to the class. And by diving into flow, state work and research.

It's become apparent to me that

music is a really powerful tool to allow people to access flow state. Of course, you can access flow state, without music.

But especially for people who don't, aren't practiced in flow. Music is an entry point to flow.

And

what the research shows, if you actually look at brain imaging,

is that our brains are

making sense of the musical patterns. They're following a musical journey. Your brain expects certain things to happen in the music even

If you have no background in musicology or anything like that,

and

when the music follows what your brain expects to happen, it puts you in to this attentional focus

this flow state

without you trying very hard,

sort of like the, the music is on and you find yourself tapping your foot, and you didn't even realize you were tapping your foot that is flow.

And when music does something that is jarring to your brain, whether that is

a off key note in a composition, or whether it is a playlist that has a harsh transition from one music to the other,

that has the same that has the opposite impact in the body, it has the opposite impact when it comes to flow.

It's jarring rips you out of that moment and that state.

And so getting back to freestyle playlists,

the music is really important.

If you don't consider it, you cannot give people the experience that you're trying to give. And a flow is that experience. You're not allowing people to both

ease into flow

or stay in flow.

So music is super powerful, and important.

Another thing that has come up a lot has to do with this idea of pleasure.

And my background is in circus, I started doing aerial in

a trap he's rig

and around other people who had trained

aerial circus.

So

when we think about what circus is circus, a spectacle, circus is the Tada moments. Circus is the big drops in the death defying acts.

And then we also have aerial dance. So we do have traditions that are circus apparatuses, but they aren't from the culture of circus. So that that is something different.

But circus itself

is more toward I would say that no pain, no gain philosophy. It's a little old school. It's a little traditional in

this idea that if you want to succeed, you have to work really hard and sacrifice in order to achieve amazing feats.

So

when recreational amateurs, people who are just kind of interested in doing aerial silks start along that path.

There isn't a lot of sympathy, empathy for

what is uncomfortable, what hurts?

What is hard.

It is very much I went through this and so you will be fine.

And again, that is accepting that pain is the is a big part of Ariel.

And I'm not gonna get too deep into

the toxicity of that. But what I will say is that

it impacts how we view movement.

When you think about training, I'm just going to say trapeze.

If you warm up,

and you approach the bar, and the first part is warming up your grip, you can feel the calluses. The bars is hard and the tape is scratchy. And everything you're doing here is to almost dole your senses to the discomfort of the apparatus.

So you might get on the bar, he might hold the ropes, he might roll over to a front balance, so that you can feel the weight on your hip crease. This is all designed to

get you use to the discomfort.

So that then you can continue, and you can work harder, you could train harder, you can do more, you can tape your ribs, right? You can put padding around your elbows, you can do all the things to make it less uncomfortable, but there is always that ever present, this hurts.

And what is the opposite of that? The opposite? is leaning into pleasure, what feels good?  
Where does your body want to go versus where are you making it go?

There is very little in circus around following pleasure on your apparatus.

And

flow

is all about pleasure.

Flow

only persists. If it feels good to your body.

If you experience a moment of pain, it is going to rip you out of flow.

So

flow is almost the antithesis of the way that circus artists train.

And going back to what I was saying earlier, I think that in part that is why that word can feel so foreign

in the circus context,

but

that Word Flow, that concept of leaning into pleasure is so important to having a long practice and a fulfilling one.

If all you want to do is perform your acts, be a professional, get paid for it, then quit and then do something else with your life. That is absolutely a choice.

But if

the reason that you are obsessed with this work is something deeper.

If you want to be able to do it for the rest of your life,

you need to start looking deeper

and

flow.

Doing what feels good

is going to always lead you in the direction of what's good for your body and what's good for your mind.

And that is the path to longevity

All right, I think I think that's all that I wanted to say. today. I'll just leave you with a few very brief

words around.

Flow not having a look.

Flow. If we think about flow is a feeling flow is a state the leads you into doing what feels good for your body. That means that flow doesn't have a specific look. It doesn't have a specific outcome. flow can be fluid flow.

Can Be quick. flow can be erratic,

but that has to feel good in your body to do. And, you know, sometimes jumping around and shaking your body

feels good. And sometimes moving slow and languidly

feels good as well.

So as you lean into pleasure, keep in mind that flow does not have a look.

However you're doing it does not

look bad.

It has no right or wrong.

It just is.

All right, thank you so much. I hope you'll join me and the rest of my fabulous speakers, June 22 through 24th For unraveling the myth of flow, it is 100% free for 48 hour access to all of the speakers presentations. But I know some of you may go out of town or be busy that weekend. And absolutely if you want lifetime access to all the speaker presentations, as well as over \$2,000 in bonuses, and a private podcast where I go in depth talking about flow to all of the speakers, or with all of the speakers not talking about them, I promise.

If you want all of those things, you can get it by purchasing the VIP pass. So once you register for the summit, keep an eye out for the screen directly after it'll give you all the information if you're interested in upgrading.

Thank you so much. I promise I won't wait as long to come back to you next time.