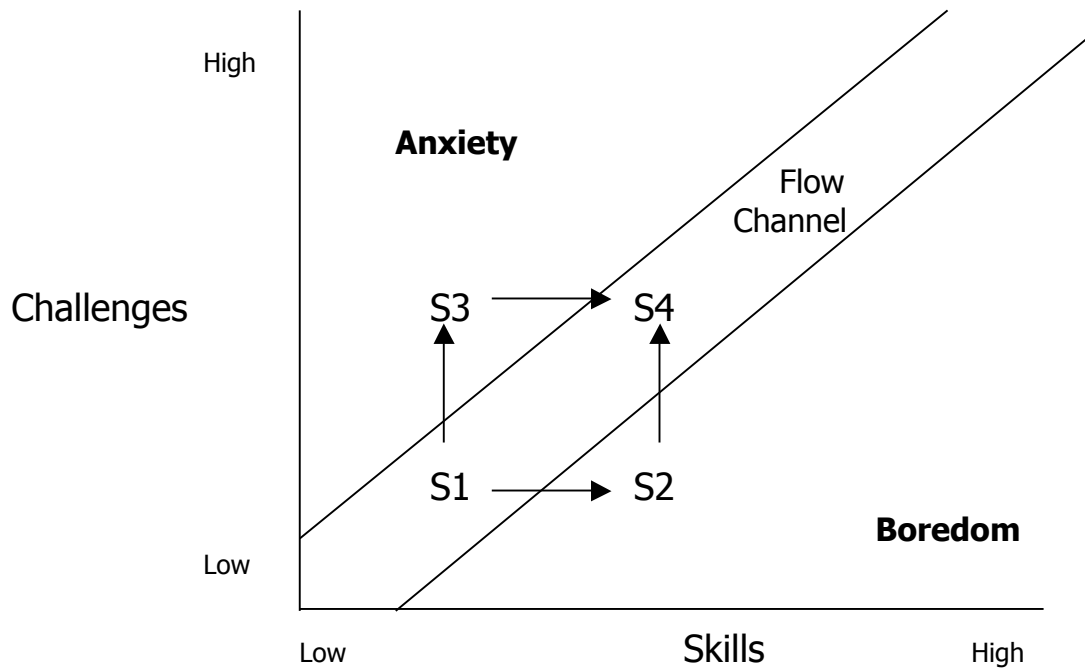


How flow leads to growth



Flow activities often provide people with a sense of discovery, a creative feeling of moving into a new reality. The diagram shows how this works.

When a person takes on a challenge which matches well with their level of skills, they find themselves in a flow state (S1).

If they become more skilful at the activity but the level of challenge remains the same, they get bored (S2). If at this point they do not increase the challenge, for example by setting themselves new goals, they may give up the activity altogether – they certainly won't enjoy it. On the other hand, they can get back into flow (S4) by making the activity more complex.

If, on the other hand, they make the task too challenging too soon for their level of skill, they get anxious and frustrated (S3). One way back into flow would be to make the task less challenging, so as to return to the original state (S1). In practice it can be difficult to ignore challenges once you know they exist, and so the person is more likely to find ways of developing their skills until they are back into flow (S4). And so the process goes on, with pleasure dependent on increasing skill and complexity....