Flow Theory and Therapeutic Horse Riding

To feel pleasure and also to be able to perceive when one's own abilities are in a resonant dynamic locomotion with the tasks assigned to us, means to be in flow (cf. Csikszentmihalyi, 2007).

To realize the flow as a leader for oneself, but (and above all) to make this option possible for the entrusted employees by a goal-oriented organization of the working life.

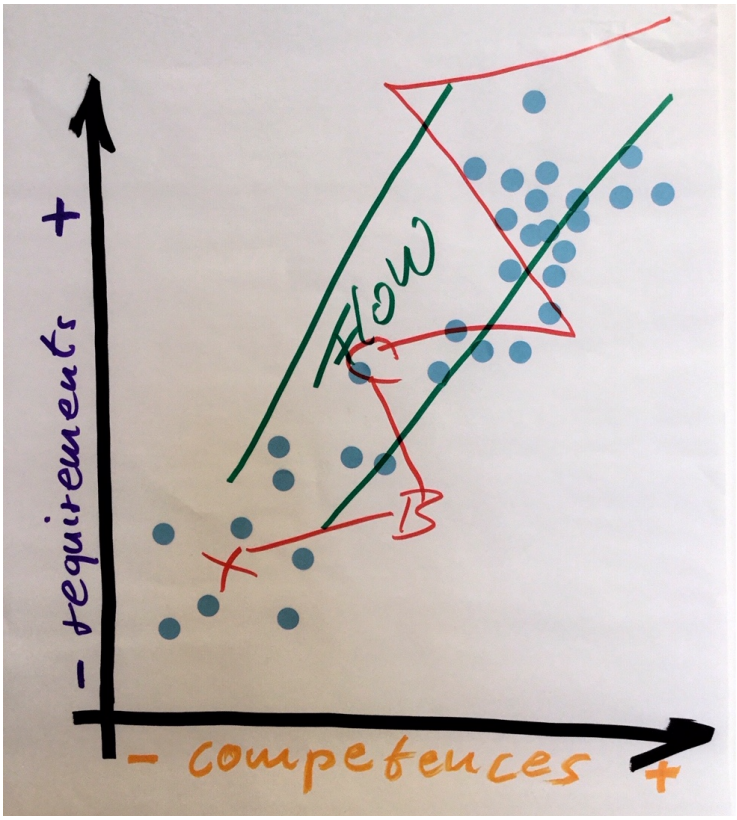

Fig.: 1 quick flipchart query with the participants to query the Flow status of the conference participants (Fót 2019)

The question was to insert the point into the coordinates system, exactly at the place that fits to their current situation in the field of therapeutic riding.
On the abscissa (X) the own competences and the occupational requirements on the ordinate (Y). Points (blue) stand for the position of the participants and were set spontaneously to show the relationship between their personal skills and the demands placed on them.

This spontaneously achieved result shows a high proportion of happiness in the group of the conference participants (n=40). However, it also shows that a certain proportion are still looking for challenges.

From the presentation of the flow principle (Fig.: 2) it becomes clear that, on the one hand, the intrinsic willingness to develop on the part of the employee must be given as well as the ability of the immediate superior to recognize the individual positions of the employee outside the flow and to be able to initiate meaningful measures which restore the resonant situation.

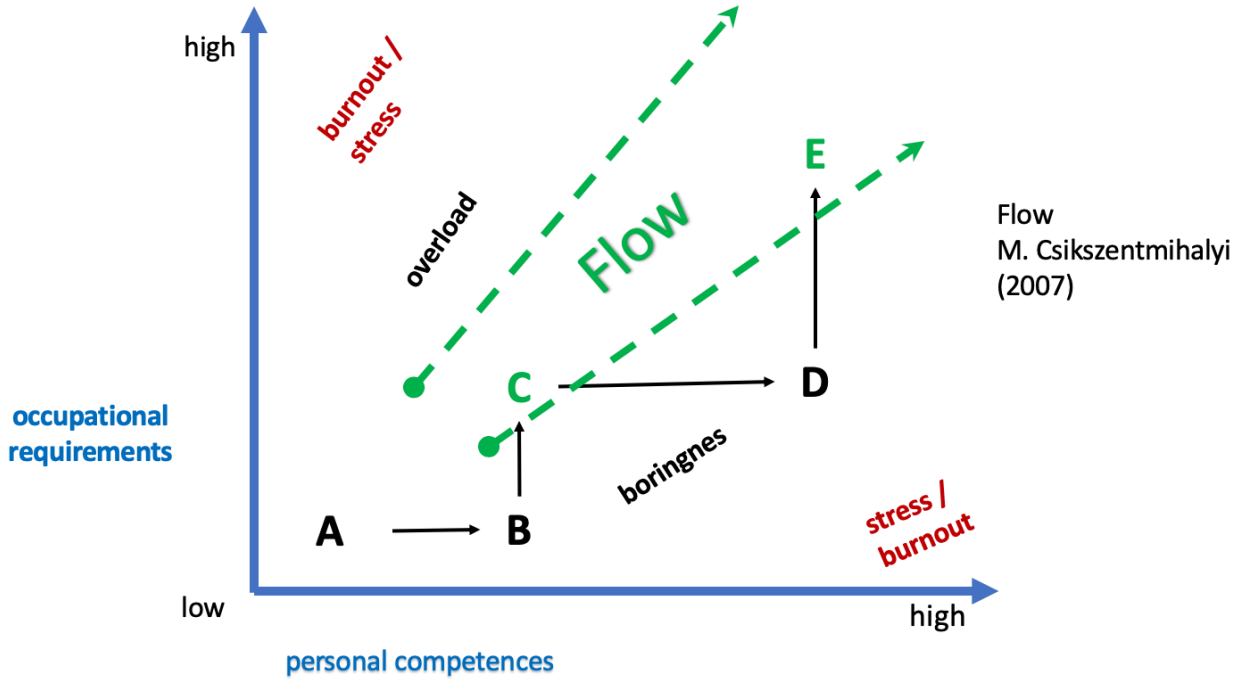

Fig.: 2 own illustration (Flow model Csikszentmihalyi, 2007)

The modern neurophysiological treatment concept (Bobath – Association of Bobath Trained Therapists Germany) speaks of alignement: This refers to the initial position in a broader sense. This means here: If a defined action - taking into account the personal motivational situation of the person acting - is expected, the framework conditions must be supportive in line with the hoped-for development (cf. Haus, 2010).

Similarly, in employee development, a supportive framework, a robust fundament, or a balanced level of departure must be created to create the professional atmosphere for a mutual (manager and employee) flow experience.

The fit of the employee to the ideal task must not be a static moment. Instead, it must be carried out dynamically, in a mutually provocative harmony of abilities in the mirror of challenges (cf. Csikszentmihalyi, 2007; cf. Becker, 2018).

These perfect conditions of the overall performance, in which space and time seem to be forgotten, are currently even more common in certain sports or in artistic creative phases with a high degree of concentration than in professional life (cf. Franken, 2010).

Transfer of the Flow Theory into the field of Therapeutic Riding

Flow or happiness in this context means that you are in the playful balance between the demands and your abilities.
You get into this state and you remain in this state by performing difficult tasks.

The precondition for this, however, is the ability of therapists and teachers to understand and recognize this principle and to act accordingly.

"Picking up the children where they stand is not only valid in hippotherapy!"

Pick up your students, your co-workers, your volunteers where they stand and develop them into new competencies and tasks.

This is our responsibility independent of our organizational structure and the objectives of our companies.
It is one of the guiding principles of our Hungarian Hippotherapy training.

The flow theory is also reflected in other premises of our training concept:

- act and move as if you were playing a musical instrument (act independently and freely)

- Harmony between requirements and skills at a high level

- Clear goal and action structure

- Focus on what you do

- Techniques and Skills in the Status of Sleepwalking Action

- Fascination, inspiration, infection in a dynamic process between empowerment and demand (experiencing flow)

Let me close with a basic thought of Csikszentmihályi (2007).

"The people don't just want to work for a living...
They need a meaningful goal that transforms an unplanned existence into an enjoyable adventure"

Csikszentmihályi is now Emeritus Psychology Professor at the University of Chicago and was born in 1934 in Rijeka (at that time Italy) as the son of the Hungarian Consul.
Occupational psychology and business management are his scientifically passions. In 2011 he was also awarded the Széchenyi Prize. One of his best-known research areas is the desire to work, flow theory.

The same applies, modified for the therapy - to celebrate it meaningful and pleasurable.

Let´s go ahead, develop by the way yourself and enjoy life.

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