



PERSONAL INJURY LAW JOURNAL

805-962-2022

WWW.NORDSTRANDLAW.COM

JANUARY 2021

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How to Find Your Flow in 2021

Have you ever started working on an important project and looked up at the clock after what felt like minutes only to find that hours had passed? If you have, you've probably experienced "flow state," aka the Holy Grail of concentration and achievement.

WHAT IS A FLOW STATE? Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes a flow state as a "focus that, once it becomes intense, leads to a sense of ecstasy, a sense of clarity: you know exactly what you want to do from one moment to the other; you get immediate feedback." That sounds complex, but you can also think of flow as being "in the zone." And it might be the key to achieving your New Year's goals. That's because a flow state almost always coincides with tackling a difficult task, and when you're in a flow state, even the most challenging things feel relatively easy.

WHY ARE HIGH ACHIEVERS OBSESSED WITH FLOW? Flow state doesn't only happen for people with desk jobs. You can get it while running, playing chess, dancing, or climbing a mountain, and it's considered the Holy Grail because it has a host of benefits. According to the meditation app Headspace, those perks include

heightened focus (goodbye, distractions!), a sense of clarity, feelings of happiness and pleasure, and the impression that all obstacles ahead of you have disappeared. That makes accomplishing your goals feel like less of a struggle. It's no wonder high-achieving hobbyists, workers, and creatives crave the feeling!

HOW CAN YOU GET IN A FLOW? Usually, a flow state isn't planned — it just happens. In a BBC article, author Steven Kotler describes flow as "a happy accident." But he also notes that the occurrence can make us "more accident-prone." To set yourself up for a flow state, find a quiet place to work and choose an activity that's difficult but meaningful for you. Ideally, it should be something you've already put work into perfecting. If you've never tried painting before, you probably won't find flow on your first attempt, but an experienced painter could achieve it while mastering a new technique.

Some people claim that being in a flow state is a form of meditation and that learning how to meditate can help you reach it. To that end, apps like Headspace and Evenflow (for iPhones only) are great places to start! Before you know it, you'll be finding your flow like a pro.

LOOKING BACK ON 3 DECADES OF CLIENTS

GRATITUDE

I hope this newsletter finds you healthy and well. Like most of you, I was certainly happy to turn the 2020 calendar page and look forward to the return to some semblance of "normal" in 2021, particularly with the COVID-19 vaccine on the horizon.

This past year, NordstrandBlack quickly adapted to the new "virtual" world of civil litigation (although, we sorely miss the daily, in-person meetings with our clients). Our attorneys and staff got up to speed and mastered Zoom technology in order to efficiently and professionally represent our clients in all forums such as depositions, mediations, arbitrations, settlement negotiations, and bench trials (before a judge but no jury). Sadly, most, if not all, civil cases in the foreseeable future will continue to be managed by the courts via Zoom for safety reasons. Once things open up, criminal cases will be given priority over civil jury trials. It is our hope that cases will resolve at a faster pace this year, as judges continue to pressure parties to settle in order to lessen the court's case backlog.

At the end of each year, and particularly after the whopper of a year we just had, I take time to go through my list of clients that spans more than three decades. With each case, I take a moment to remember and appreciate every single person I've had the pleasure of helping and knowing over the years. Your cases, life stories, and trust in me continue to inspire me in my personal and professional life and give me the passion to continue to do the work I do. I am so grateful for all that you have given me and so humbled to have been a part



of your journey. Helping people and forging these meaningful connections is one of the key reasons I chose to practice law.

NordstrandBlack will continue to fight for the most meaningful and just resolution for you and your loved ones, and we remain 100% committed to supporting you with professionalism, resources, and compassion every step of the way. When someone suffers a personal injury, it doesn't just impact them — it weighs heavily on loved ones as well. As a parent, I know the importance of a family's health, safety, and security. As an attorney, I vow to fight for you and your family just as I would my own.

We will continue to keep you updated on changes in the law and how to best protect your rights. Instead of our regular monthly newsletter, we will be publishing quarterly moving forward. If there's any content you've particularly enjoyed reading, please feel free to reach out to me at RN@nblaw.us and let me know what you would like to see more of in the future. We'll still be actively posting on our website (NordstrandLaw.com) and Facebook page (Facebook.com/NordstrandBlack), and we want to continue sharing content that's most valuable to you.

From my family to yours, I wish you health and happiness in 2021.

-Renée Nordstrand

LET THAT FRESH AIR FUEL YOU

Hunkering down and waiting for the gray skies to clear up sounds pretty nice. But the reality is, if we deprive ourselves of time outside, we do ourselves a big disservice both mentally and physically. Staying indoors all day affects your energy and mood, which makes it hard to get anything done, so here are four easy tips to make it easier to get a little fresh air:

- 1. MAKE IT A PRIORITY.** Getting outside means making the conscious effort to do so. If you want to reap its benefits, you have to decide to make it a priority in your day-to-day schedule. If you make the act important to you, you have more motivation to actually do it.
- 2. USE MORNINGS EFFECTIVELY.** Waking up and getting the day started can be hard. But studies have shown that natural light helps decrease your melatonin production, which means you feel ready to face the day sooner. So, set yourself a second alarm to head outside and take a quick walk around the block just after waking. Don't even wash your face or grab coffee. Just get out there.



3. TAKE YOUR WORK OUTSIDE. If you're working from home, take some work outdoors. Phone and virtual meetings are a great outdoor option, especially if you'll just be an active listener and aren't required to do any work simultaneously. Attach a note to your meeting reminders to get yourself set up outside five minutes before you start.

4. CREATE A SCHEDULE. It might feel strange to set reminders throughout the day to step outside, but you easily get wrapped up in activities and overlook breaks, and these reminders are exactly what you need. Start with 10-minute blocks three times a day. If you stick to them, soon you won't need a schedule to get outside anymore.

Damp, cloudy days may be cold, but even when you're bundled up under a jacket and scarf, just 5-10 minutes outside can do wonders for your mood and energy for hours.

CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

A GUIDE TO ZOOM ETIQUETTE

After nine months of using Zoom-type apps regularly, the most prominent question we all continue to face is: What's the proper etiquette to follow on camera? There may not be a finite list that encompasses all scenarios, but there are certainly a few rules to follow to get your call started on the right foot.

Know your audience. A workplace meeting calls for some cleaning up of both yourself and your background — and preferably room with a closed door free from distractions like pets or kids. Friends and family can be a little more laid back, but it's still considerate to keep your space as distraction-free as possible.

Establish activities. Determine ahead of time what is and isn't okay during the call. For example, if it's a "lunch meeting," then by all means, eat your lunch together! But if it's strictly a focused business meeting, don't be the single person munching on salad in the background. If you are going to eat lunch, you might need to tell the group you are going to turn off your video and audio while you eat.

Introduce everyone individually. Just as you would in a real-life situation, if you want to initiate a conversation between people who've never met, you introduce them



first. The same rule applies to a video meeting. This creates a welcoming environment and stimulates participation.

Look into the camera. When you're talking or someone is talking directly to you, it's important to look into the camera rather than at the images of yourself or other participants. This mimics the act of making eye contact, creating a more engaging conversation.

Mute when not speaking. Audio comes through much clearer when there's only one person speaking at a time. To ensure that's happening, always remember to mute yourself when it's not your turn to speak. It also gives everyone a chance to contribute to the conversation.

Listen actively. Some Zoom calls may get boring, but because you're on camera, you want to at least try to be attentive. Use nonverbal cues like nodding your head, smiling, and giving a thumbs up. Speakers will appreciate your responsiveness and it leads to more natural conversation.

Zoom is a nifty tool for reaching out to others during these times of isolation. If we put our best efforts into it, we'll get so much more meaningful connection in return.

E-BIKES FOR SANTA BARBARA?

By the time you read this, work will already be underway on a new project in downtown Santa Barbara. You might recognize electric bike sharing from the headlines, or from other cities you've visited, but soon we'll get such a system as well. Depending on whom you ask, it's overdue. Manufacturer BCycle says its 250 e-bikes and 500 docking stations would have been running months ago if not for the pandemic.

COVID-19 presents other problems to bike sharing. Despite having a BCycle team that collects the e-bikes daily and returns them to their docking stations, the Santa Barbara News-Press reports that "sanitation will be mostly up to the rider." That means that anybody looking to take advantage of these new electric bicycles will want to load up on wipes and make sure the bike is clean before they use it.

By mid-January, there will be three Eastside locations (including by Trader Joe's on Milpas Street and by the Eastside Library) and two Westside locations. Eventually, BCycle will have docking stations on the Waterfront, Cabrillo Boulevard, and Mission.

Here's how the system will work. A person goes to a dock and pays or puts in their information if they have a yearly membership. Either way, they do this through an app on their phone. Then they can take the bike for a 30-minute period or longer. Described as a "local model" business that isn't for tourists, BCycle's system rests on the e-bikes themselves, which are quite different from the "pedal bike" you might be used to.

BCycle's bicycles are electric, meaning you don't always have to pedal. In addition, they have built-



in lighting for safety and added visibility at night. And once you put in your destination using the app, the bicycle itself will provide directions on how to get there. BCycle hopes that once you try an e-bike, you might be in the market for an electric bike of your own.

Friendlier to the environment and easy on congestion, at least in theory, e-bikes *do* have some exciting potential. How they play out in Santa Barbara — and with BCycle in particular — remains to be seen, however. Many cities across the nation have had mixed relationships with such businesses, as a glance at the headlines for Lime eScooters will show. Still, we should remain positive and allow this experiment to play out. It never hurts to try new things, especially if you can have fun doing it.

We Want You to Think of Us as Your Law Firm

If you have a legal matter that needs attention, let us know. If we can't handle the matter, we will refer you to a firm that can. Please feel free to refer us to your friends and family for their legal needs. We welcome the opportunity to help!

WORD SEARCH

N	W	O	D	T	N	U	O	C	W	P	D	R	C	K	
O	E	F	M	T	C	F	J	R	E	Z	J	W	F	T	
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Beginning
Celebration
Clock
Countdown
Family
Fireworks
Friends
January
Midnight
New
Party
Winter
Year

If you've loved working with our firm, please leave us a review on [NordstrandLaw.com/Review!](https://www.NordstrandLaw.com/Review/)

LUXURIOUS VEGAN CHOCOLATE MOUSSE

Making chocolate mousse with avocados may sound strange, but we promise it's a match made in heaven! This sinfully delicious recipe is a great holiday treat.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz vegan dark chocolate, chopped
- 2 large avocados, pitted and skinned
- 3 tbsp cocoa powder
- 1/4 cup almond milk
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1-3 tsp maple syrup, to taste
- Fresh berries, for garnish

DIRECTIONS

1. In a microwave-safe bowl, melt the dark chocolate. Heat in 15-second intervals, then stir and repeat until melted. Set aside to cool.
2. In a food processor or blender, combine the cooled chocolate and other ingredients. Blend until smooth and creamy, adding additional sweetener as desired.
3. Scoop into glasses and refrigerate at least 2 hours. Top with berries and serve!

Inspired by [WellPlated.com](https://www.WellPlated.com)