

Research reveals how emotional intelligence affects performance

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(Medical Xpress)—Musicians with high emotional intelligence are more likely to get in the 'zone', research from Goldsmiths, University of London has shown.

By analysing [emotional responses](#) amongst performing classical pianists, researchers have discovered new clues why some easier reach 'flow' - a psychological state associated with extreme fulfilment, optimised performance, health and well-being.

The insights will enable performers to pinpoint how their personality affects achievement of 'flow', which many athletes and musicians believe make them perform better.

Often performers practice for years to increase the ability to reach 'flow', and the new findings may give coaches and teachers new tactics to get students 'in the zone'.

The study, led by Professor Joydeep Bhattacharya, Department of Psychology at Goldsmiths, found that pianists with higher 'trait emotional intelligence' – the ability to competently process strong emotional information – are better at focusing on the complex task of playing piano and therefore more likely to reach 'flow'.

Professor Bhattacharya commented: "Surprisingly, the ability to reach 'flow' does not depend on time in piano training or the age of first piano lesson, but on a personality trait."

"'Flow' experience is highly emotional, rewarding, and [music](#) is strongly communicative of emotions and rewarding as well. So it makes sense that those with high [emotional intelligence](#) ultimately find it easier to 'zone in'."

'Flow' is often researched in the context of performance and sports, but this study is the first to explain the individual differences in the relation between 'flow' and [emotional experience](#) of music.

Certain musical types of music also affected the 'flow' experience. The majority of participants found that playing Classical music (specifically the music by Frédéric Chopin and other composers of the Romantic era) was far more likely to bring out 'flow' than for example Jazz.

Professor Bhattacharya added: "What is really interesting here is what this can tell us about 'flow' in general. If the ability to experience flow depends on both individual differences amongst pianists and genres of music, how can we apply this in other contexts such as sports or even in the workplace?"

Provided by Goldsmiths, University of London

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