



## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q: I am an evaluator. How can I use this in my practice?

A: The **EvaluationLive!**<sup>®</sup> model can be used to help diagnose what's going wrong with an evaluation and what practitioners might do to make things "right" in terms of engaging clients and other stakeholders in evaluation processes. Csikszentmihalyi, in his 1997 book entitled *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life* notes that flow can happen in the workplace, and there are things one can do to change a routine situation that one dreads into a flow-like experience. Csikszentmihalyi says that the first step to finding flow in the workplace is to "pay attention" so that you can understand thoroughly what is happening and why. Then, Csikszentmihalyi says to "entertain alternatives and to experiment with them until a better way is found." (page 105) **EvaluationLive!**<sup>®</sup> provides a menu of things to pay attention to regarding the evaluation experience: elements of the evaluator, elements of the client/stakeholders, and elements of the relationship between them. The evaluator can also use **EvaluationLive!**<sup>®</sup> to think about alternative ways to manage the evaluation that might inspire stakeholders to be engaged with the work.

### Q: I work in a nonprofit. What can I do with this model?

A: Program directors in nonprofit organizations can use **EvaluationLive!**<sup>®</sup> when trying to find an evaluator; the model can guide the development of an evaluation RFP and interviews with prospective evaluators. Program directors can also use **EvaluationLive!**<sup>®</sup> to identify what needs to happen within their organization to maximize evaluation's use and engage staff, volunteers, board members, and program participants in the evaluation processes. We've presented **EvaluationLive!**<sup>®</sup> to staff of nonprofits. The staff developed new insights about their work with evaluation and evaluators after seeing the model. At one presentation, a program staff said that she didn't realize that the nonprofit should be driving the evaluation questions. She thought that it was the funder's privilege to determine what questions the evaluation will answer. At another presentation, a program staff said that he now knows why an evaluation experience wasn't useful to the organization; the evaluators were graduate students with knowledge related to their academic coursework, but they did not have content expertise related to the program intervention. As a result the evaluation report was not insightful.

### Q: How was the EvaluationLive!<sup>®</sup> model developed?

A: The concept of **EvaluationLive!**<sup>®</sup> originated when co-creators Melanie Hwalek and Mary Grich Williams noticed that occasionally, during their separate encounters with clients, they would experience of what Csikszentmihalyi, the father of positive psychology, called "flow." Csikszentmihalyi defines flow as "a state of heightened focus and immersion in activities such as art, play and work."<sup>1</sup> In the world of work, Csikszentmihalyi found that very successful CEOs define success as "something that helps others and at the same time makes you feel happy as you are working at it."<sup>2</sup> Hwalek and Williams met regularly for about three years sharing when they had flow experiences during meetings with clients or colleagues in an effort to define the gestalt of the evaluation experience that engendered the sense of flow for both the evaluators and stakeholders. They also searched the evaluation literature and found synergies between **EvaluationLive!**<sup>®</sup> and well-

<sup>1</sup> See Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1997) *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life*. New York: Basic Books. (pp. 29-30).

<sup>2</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2004, Feb) *Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi: Flow: the secret of happiness* [Video file]. Retrieved from [http://www.ted.com/talks/mihaly\\_csikszentmihalyi\\_on\\_flow.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/mihaly_csikszentmihalyi_on_flow.html).

known evaluation frameworks such as empowerment evaluation, utilization-focused evaluation, and evaluation capacity building. During their discussions and deliberations, Hwalek and Williams eventually defined the **EvaluationLive!**<sup>®</sup> essential elements.

**Q: What more is anticipated in terms of new information or resources regarding the EvaluationLive!<sup>®</sup> model?**

A: Our current goal is to build out the model in ways that can be used in evaluation practice. We are gathering resources that fit into each element or category of the **EvaluationLive!**<sup>®</sup> model. See the next Q&A item to find out how you can contribute.

**Q: How can I keep up-to-date with conversations and new resources about EvaluationLive!<sup>®</sup> and contribute to the conversation?**

A: We invite evaluators and nonprofit staff to join our discussions on [LinkedIn](#) and follow us on [twitter](#). We want to collaborate with other evaluators and nonprofits who want to study **EvaluationLive!**<sup>®</sup> with us. We are interested in all information related to how people turn around ho-hum experiences and develop evaluations that engage all stakeholders in an excited state of learning. Join us in as many ways as interest you. As new material becomes available, it will be shared at [www.EvaluationLive.org](http://www.EvaluationLive.org) and an announcement will be made on LinkedIn and Twitter. To join the **EvaluationLive!**<sup>®</sup> LinkedIn group, click [here](#). To join us on Twitter, use @EvaluationLive.

**Q: Who can I contact about further questions or to discuss presentation opportunities at my organization about the EvaluationLive!<sup>®</sup>?**

A: Contact Melanie Hwalek at SPEC Associates by either email at [mhwalek@specassociates.org](mailto:mhwalek@specassociates.org) or by phone at (313) 964-0500. SPEC Associates is located in the USA in Detroit, Michigan.

**Q: Can you tell me more about the creators of the model?**

A: The concept of **EvaluationLive!**<sup>®</sup> originated with the co-creators Melanie Hwalek and Mary Grich Williams.

Mary, formerly Lumina Foundation's Evaluation Director, is currently an independent evaluation consultant for nonprofits and foundations. She holds an M.S. in Education from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a B.A. in Psychology from Duke University. When at the Lumina Foundation, Mary championed evaluation within the foundation where she managed most of the foundation's national evaluation work. Prior to joining Lumina Foundation in 2006, she owned and operated her own evaluation consulting firm for 15 years where she conducted more than 70 evaluation studies. She is a member of the American Evaluation Association and has served in leadership roles there and in several associations related to adult literacy, continuing education and employment.

Melanie is the CEO of SPEC Associates, a program evaluation and process improvement organization headquartered in Detroit, Michigan. She holds an M.A. and Ph.D. in Applied Social Psychology from Wayne State University. Her B.S. in Biology is from Niagara University. Melanie has been conducting evaluations of social programs for more than 30 years. Her experience varies widely from evaluations of grassroots community-based programs through multi-state national evaluations. Melanie has been a member of the American Evaluation Association since its inception and served on its Board of Directors from 2004 through 2006. She holds the Credentialed Evaluator designation from the Canadian Evaluation Society.

SPEC Associates is continuing to develop this model's theoretical basis and tools. You can find out more about SPEC Associates at [www.specassociates.org](http://www.specassociates.org).