Staying in the zone

Staying in the zone is not easy and we are sometimes our own worst enemy!

I went out for a run today and after about a kilometre or so I could feel the "bounce"; I was in my stride and could feel myself bouncing from my left to right foot and back?

Strangely, each time I first notice the bounce, I lose it; as though concentrating on it disturbs my rhythm — but as I get into my stride it comes back.

I ran down to the river, over the bridge and onto the dyke that separates Toulouse from the flood plane with a comfortable bounce in my stride.

I then picked up a track that leads down to the river and back to the bridge and home.

The track and the river are great, small rapids on the river and birds and squirrels (and occasionally deer) on the track.

I was well into my run when I came across a small dog; the dog was obviously interested in me, in a friendly way, and the owner was calling him with "here dog, here dog".

The dog followed me for a while, with the owner still calling. It was at this point that I stopped briefly, turned to the dog and said, "bonjour toi, tu veux me dire bonjour" (it was a French dog).

This short pause was enough to completely throw me out, about 50 metres further on, I felt the need to stop and get my breath back. I wasn't too far from home, but the feeling in the final kilometre or so certainly wasn't the same.

As much as I love dogs, I don't usually stop when out running; I may say something, but I don't stop. On this occasion the "cuteness" of the dog got the better of me, to the detriment of my "performance" – which, in this case is no big deal.

I think, however, it maybe goes to show the importance of determination & focus to performance and how this can be easily disrupted.

It's interesting to watch tennis players; they have huge concentration when playing, but are happy (at least some are) to banter with the crowd during the breaks.

This ability to oscillate between "zone time" and "down time" seems to be key in maintaining sustained performance.

How do you manage the oscillation between the two states?