

Pod of Happiness Process Paper

Amy, Tate, & Alysha

Our Pod experience began when Mr. Tate Chamberlain mentioned he had just watched the movie Disaster Artist. He had the idea that he wanted to have a Pod experience that was maybe some sort of disaster? I don't know if this is what drew Alysha in, but for me, I was intrigued. Something about disaster absolutely terrifies me and my desire for predictability and control. I decided to jump in, along with Tate and Alysha, and our "Pod of "Disaster Began".

We began our first meeting by setting up ground rules and expressing our individual desires for the entire experience. We decided on a format for each bi-weekly call. Sometime during that first meeting, Tate expressed the idea of wanting to explore happiness. He had heard that Harvard has a class specifically focused on the topic of happiness and he got curious. He wondered if happiness is something we all desire and experience, but rarely discuss? He pondered what exactly is happiness, and how and why do we feel it? If we discuss and explore the concept of happiness both internally and in dialogue do we create more happiness? Just like that our Pod of Disaster transformed into Pod of Happiness.

The disaster part lingered in that we in no way settled on happiness as a topic for our whole pod presentation. Rather, the idea was that we would simply have one facilitated meeting within our pod to discuss the topic. Quite quickly however, the exploration proved multi-faceted, deep and rich. We explored happiness as a concept. Why happiness does or does not matter? What the shadow of happiness is and how happiness does or does not exist within each of us at any moment. We were particularly intrigued by happiness that had no to direct tie to circumstance. The feelings of joy that arise from seemingly nothing at all. The joy that can even arise amidst grief or pain.

We all expressed from the outset that the individual and collective experience of our pod meetings and process took precedence over completing our Pod Presentation. We were interested in discussing a rich, compelling topic for as long as it continued to be rich and compelling to us. This turned out to be the entire duration of our time together. We also choose to preference our growth as individual facilitators. Taking turns each session to function as a facilitator/participants. We shared strengths and areas of growth with each facilitator at the end of the calls.

Toward the last month of our time together, we began to brainstorm concrete ideas for our presentation. We decided we wanted to somehow give the group the direct experience of happiness as well as lead some sort of discussion around the concept of happiness.

We began with a brainstorm of ideas which included some sort of guided experience of

happiness. We also liked the idea of working in dyads. Perhaps having one partner lie on the floor like a puddle and reflect back what the other partner was saying about happiness as if they were looking in a reflecting pool. We also wanted to include happiness and elements of shadow. We discussed what the shadow of happiness is.. Was it the opposite, sadness? Was it resistance to happiness due to feelings of unworthiness? Was it unadulterated seeking of happiness at the expense of a life of purpose and meaning? We felt strongly that we didn't want to create any kind of conclusion to this inquiry for ourselves or the experience participants, but instead hold it as a question to live and explore.

When we were finally working on the nitty gritty of our pod presentation, Gabe asked the questions: What do you want people to experience? Why is this topic important? We honestly just wanted to give the experience of happiness because that was what we had spent our time on during our calls. With further reflection however, and looking up a bit of research, we discovered that individual and group happiness goes a long way to fostering cohesiveness and productivity.

Shawn Achor, author of *The Happiness Advantage*, has *found that the brain works much better when a person is feeling positive. At those times, individuals tend to be more creative and better at solving problems. And additional research has shown that when workers are happy they're more effective collaborators working toward common goals. As Achor sees it, the incentive for organizations is clear-cut—"happiness leads to greater levels of profits" for companies that take the right steps.*

We hope that through this exploration the group will not only have an experience of happiness but also have an opportunity to explore and reflect on their own happiness and what it means to them.

One of the harder parts of the design experience was narrowing down our focus. Happiness is such a complex and broad topic, we wanted to cover more! Toward the end of our time together discussing happiness, we brought up the question of whether our whole experience had been too "happy". Had we explored deeply enough shadow and was there a way to include this in our project. We ended up including resistance to happiness, but felt that an exploration of shadow in this context was not possible in the time frame allotted.

As we began designing our experience, we all knew we wanted to give the participants some sort of embodied experience of happiness. We also wanted them to examine their own beliefs and understanding of happiness with other people. Finally we wanted to end the experience with some sort shared large group feeling of happiness. Thereby exploring the idea that our own happiness can be increased when shared with others. In a society that is increasingly fraught with loneliness and isolation, the creation of individual and group happiness seems like a worthy pursuit.

Happiness has been regarded an unalienable American right from the very moment the nation formed.

Yet, American happiness has fallen over the past decade, according to the 2017 World Happiness Report, an annual ranking by the United Nation's Sustainable Development Solutions Network.