

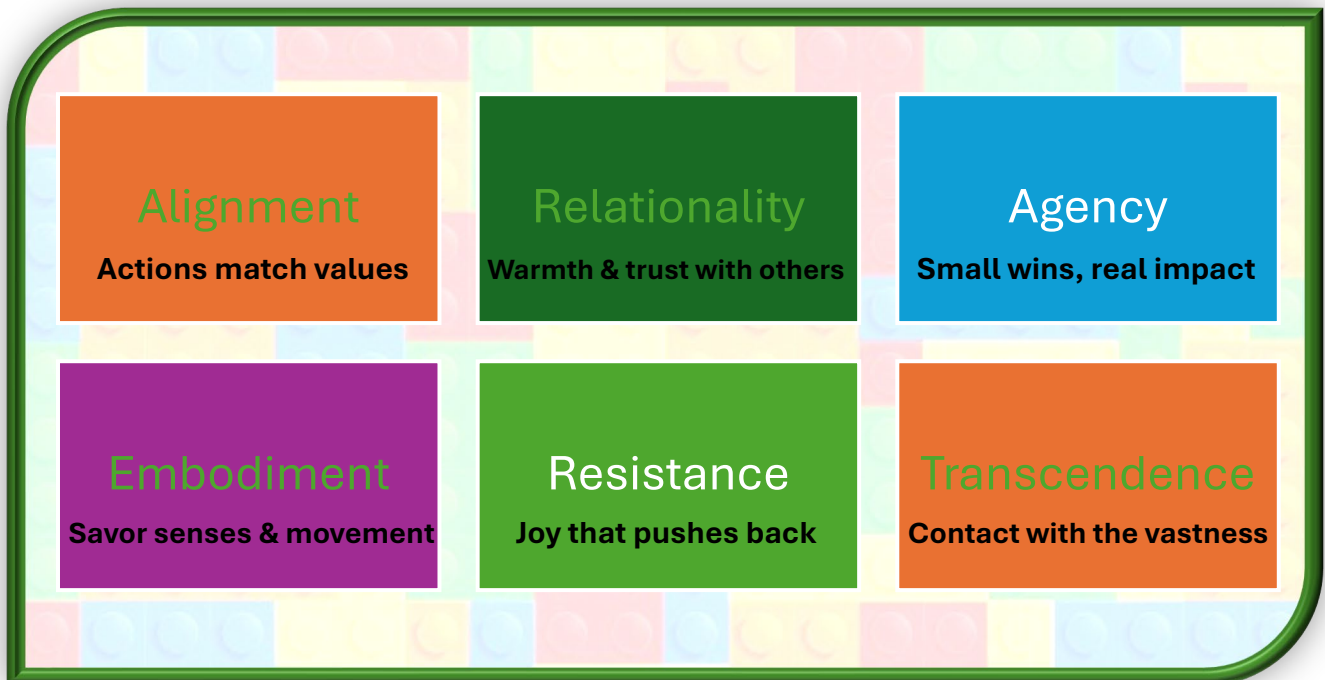
What Is Joy and How Do I Get It?

Translating the Science of Joy into Everyday Practice

Handout

1. The Big Idea

- **Joy ≠ nonstop happiness.** It's a *spark* that can coexist with sorrow **and** a *resource* that sustains us through hard days (Watkins, 2020; Whitehead & Torossian, 2021).
- A split-second brain **appraisal** ("Something important is going right—and I have some say in it") releases dopamine + oxytocin, relaxes facial muscles, slows the heart, and invites connection (Coursey, 2021).
- Because relaxed bodies broadcast safety, joy is *contagious*—it spreads through smiles, laughter, and shared rhythm (Lee, Lim, & Lee, 2022).



2. Six Building Blocks of Joy

(*Six Building Blocks of Joy*; Arnett, 2023)

Pillar	Everyday Translation	Tiny Starter Practice
Alignment	Acting like the person you want to be.	Adjust one schedule item so it reflects your values.
Relationality	Warmth & trust with others.	Text a "gratitude emoji" to a friend right now.
Agency	Moving the needle—even a little.	Do a 5-min fix (tighten a loose knob, send a feedback e-mail).

Pillar	Everyday Translation	Tiny Starter Practice
Embodiment	Enjoying senses & movement.	Notice three pleasant sensations in your next shower.
Resistance	Delight that pushes back on drudgery or injustice.	Share a meme that lifts co-workers' spirits on a tough shift.
Transcendence	Feeling part of something bigger.	Set a sunset or moon-rise alert on your phone; pause to look up.

Joy shows up most reliably when several pillars stack together—e.g., dancing (Embodiment) with friends (Relationality) for a social cause (Resistance).

3. Everyday Practices

Practice	Why It Works	Evidence
Micro-choices (2 min shared breath / soft eye-contact)	“Flips” the nervous system from guarded → open.	Coursey, 2021
Joy rounds (share wins at start of meeting)	Lowers burnout & boosts team morale.	Gould, 2022
JOMO breaks (silence notifications)	Reduces digital anxiety; frees attention.	Chan et al., 2022
Community rituals (fish-fry, Eid fair, choir)	Rhythm + story amplify individual gladness.	Pearley, 2025
Purpose scans (link tasks to mission)	Sustains motivation long after raises fade.	Aboramadan & Kundi, 2023

4. Common Myths—Busted

Myth	Reality & Evidence
1. “Joy means constant happiness.”	Joy can weave through grief (Whitehead & Torossian, 2021).
2. “Joy is purely personal.”	Shared safety rituals kept Bangladeshi queer households joyful despite threats (Ahmed & Huq, 2024).
3. “Joy is a reward you wait for.”	A 60-second gratitude text lifts mood and builds bonds (Roberts & Appiah, 2025).

5. Quick Self-Check

Question	Pillar	Your Answer
Does today’s calendar match what matters to me?	Alignment	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Did I laugh <i>with</i> someone in the last 24 h?	Relationality	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
What micro-win did I celebrate today?	Agency	_____
Did I notice a pleasant bodily sensation?	Embodiment	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Question	Pillar	Your Answer
Did I use joy to lighten a heavy space?	Resistance	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
When did I last feel awe?	Transcendence	_____

6. Key References

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7. Take-Away

Pick one pillar, design one tiny practice, try it for one week.

Joy is less of a bolt from out of the blue and more a muscle you can train—alone, together, and for the long haul.