High-engagement wargames

Graham Longley-Brown

Why?

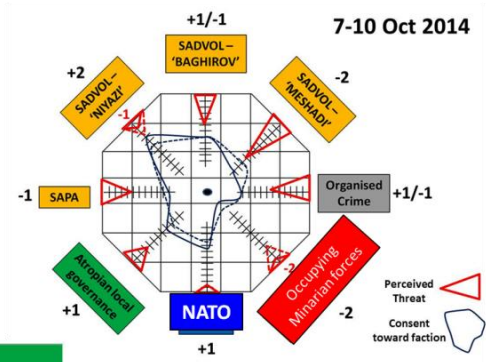
- “[Games have] the power to alter how people perceive the world around them.” (Raph Koster p.148)
- [and] “…‘high-engagement’ games top this list, where the psyche and emotions of players have been accessed.” (xxx?)
- “The power of wargames is their ability to open up participants to self-transformation through the force of a shared and constructed narrative.” (Peter Perla and ED McGrady p.127)

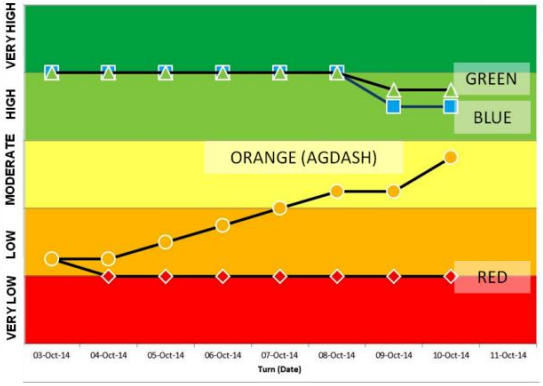
To be clear what I'm talking about

- **People**;
- the **Decisions** they take;
- and their resulting **Story-Living** experience

Support for Factions in AGDASH

- BAGHIROV is the overall commander but his subordinates lead key factions
- MESHADI (security) leads the extremist faction
- NIYAZI leads the pragmatist faction , protecting NGOs and IDPs
- Success of NIYAZI's plan leads to her becoming the leading player in AGDASH





Popular Support in YEVLAKH Province

- SADVOL exploit the power vacuum in YEVLAKH Province to create a 'state within a state'
- Governance and security improvements increase support for the pragmatic faction in SADVOL
- AGDASH serves as a base and model for further SADVOL expansion
- Questions over Blue levels of violence cause a fall in support

Assumptions

- ‘Wargame’ is not synonymous with simulation
- Processes are sound
- Primarily applicable to training/education wargames, but also to analytical wargames

Standing on the shoulders of giants

WHY WARGAMING WORKS

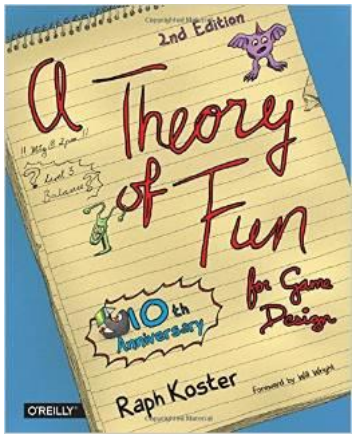
Peter P. Perla and ED McGrady

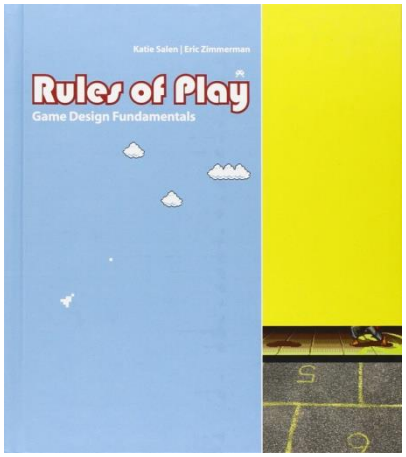
Wargaming has a long history as an in
education, and research.[1] In its broac
flict situations (see, for example, the recent
Business War Games), the technique is inc
among businesses seeking strategic advantag
use the terms "wargaming" and "gaming"
however, we mean what is called "serious ga
like gambling.)[3] Despite that history and po
ord of success is uneven. Some games seem t
portant decision n
in which they later
is the U.S. Navy's s
1930s, which helpe
the Second World
not do so well; fo

Dr. Perla earned a PhD in statistics from Carnegie-Mellon University. He has more than thirty years' experience as an analyst, project director, and research manager at the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), in Alexandria, Virginia. He has directed more than thirty research projects and has led, supported, or consulted on many gaming efforts for the military and other agencies. He is the author of The Art of Wargaming and of

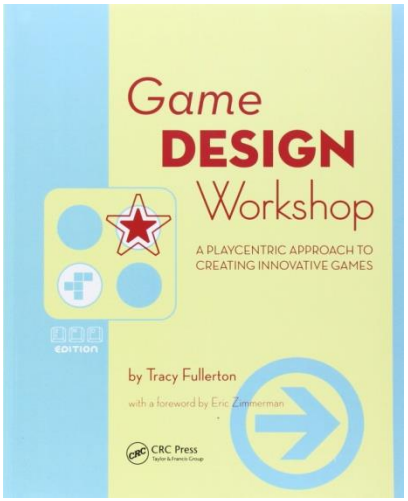
Peter Perla and
ED McGrady

Raph Koster

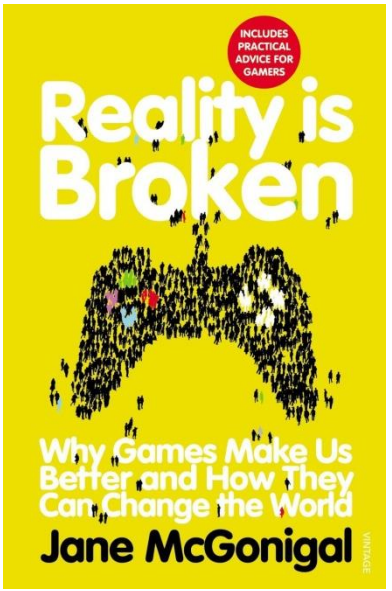




Katie Salen and
Eric Zimmerman



Tracy Fullerton



Jane McGonigal

‘Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler.’

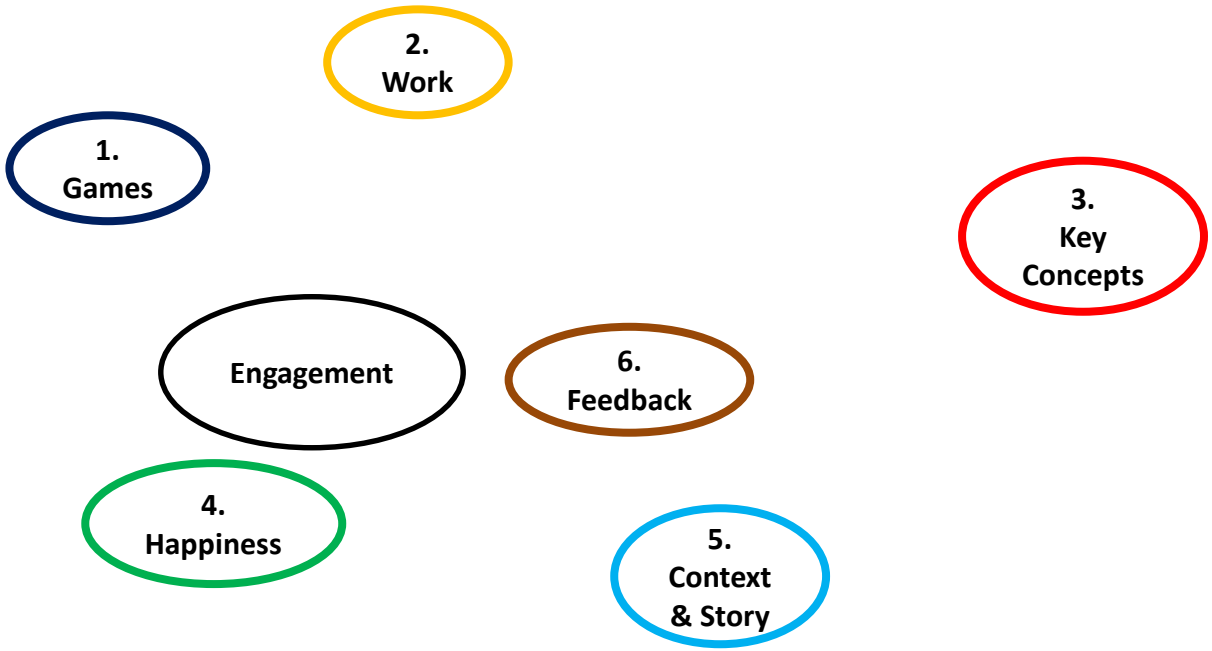
Einstein

‘Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication. It takes a lot of hard work to make something simple, to truly understand the underlying challenges and come up with elegant solutions.’

Steve Jobs

‘Everything in war(gaming) is simple, but doing the simplest thing is difficult.’

Clausewitz-ish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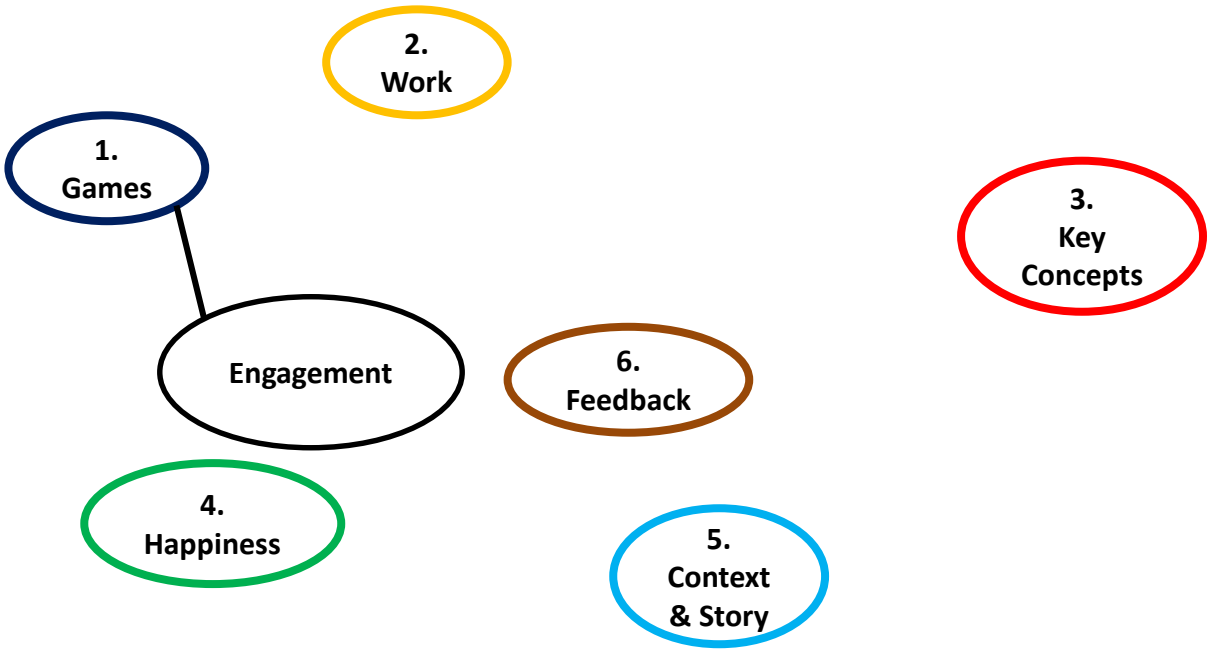
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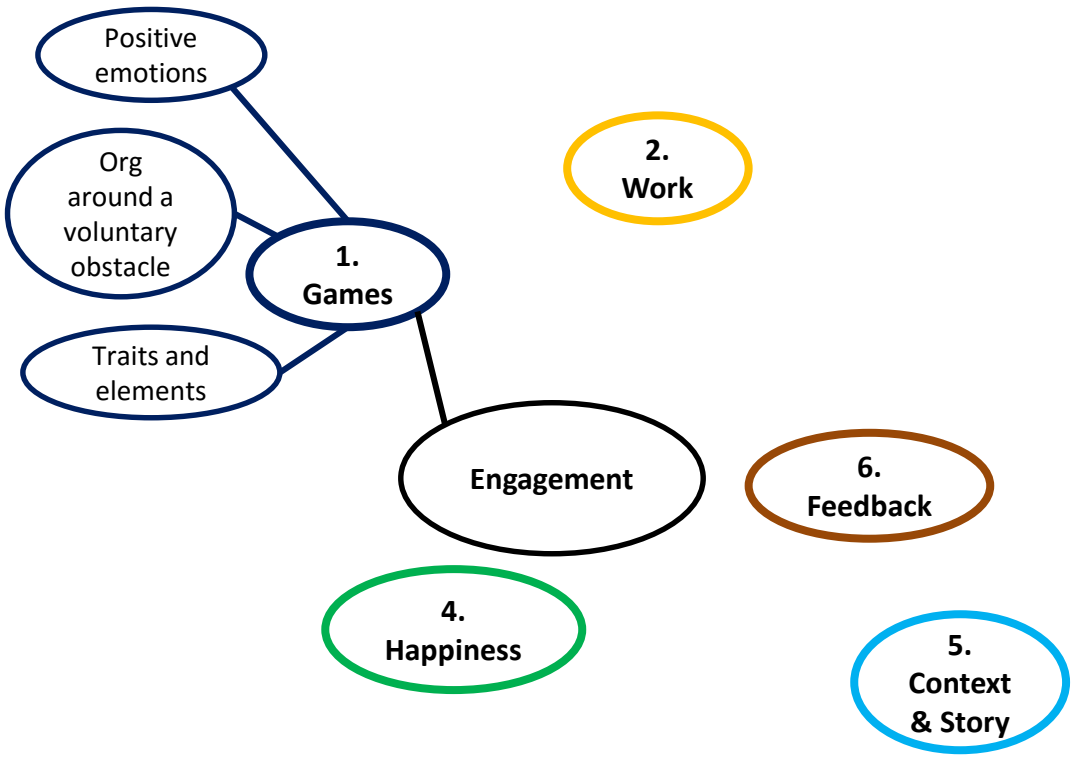
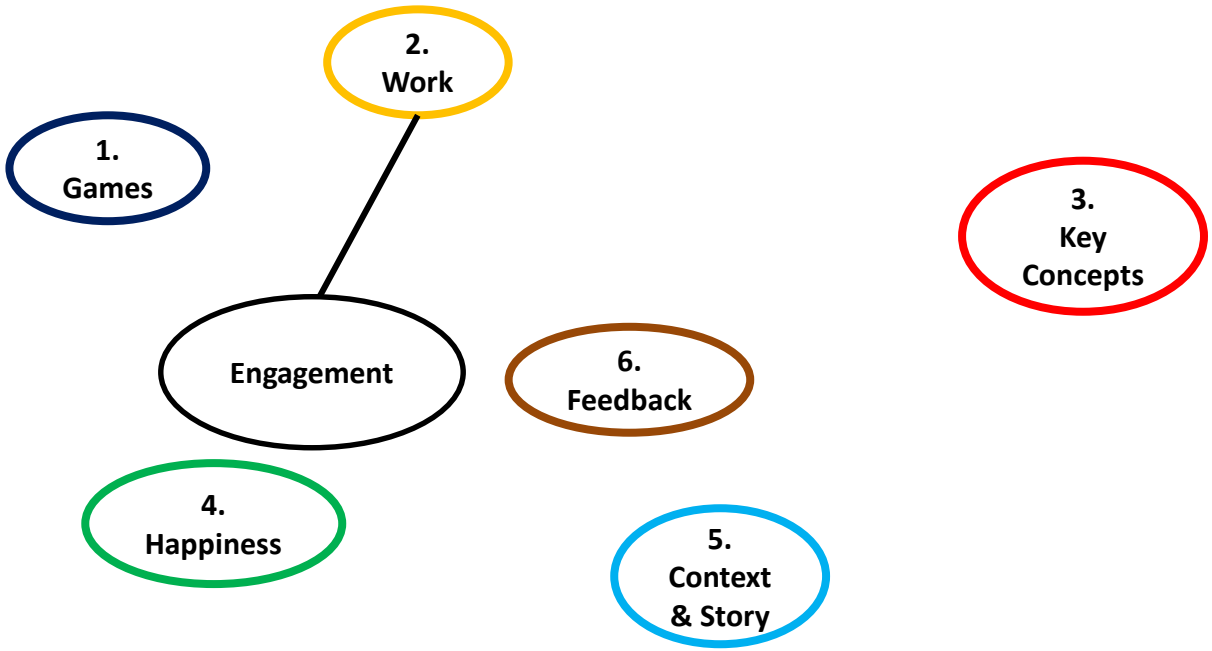


Game traits:
- Goal
- Rules
- Feedback system
- Voluntary participation

Elements:
- Procedures
- Players
- Decisions
- Conflict
- Boundaries
- Resources
- Outcome(s)

"Playing a game is the voluntary attempt to overcome unnecessary obstacles." (Bernard Suits)

"Anything else you think you know about games, forget it for now. All the good that comes out of games – every single way that games make us happier and help us change the world – **stems from their ability to organise us around a voluntary obstacle**." (Jane McGonigal)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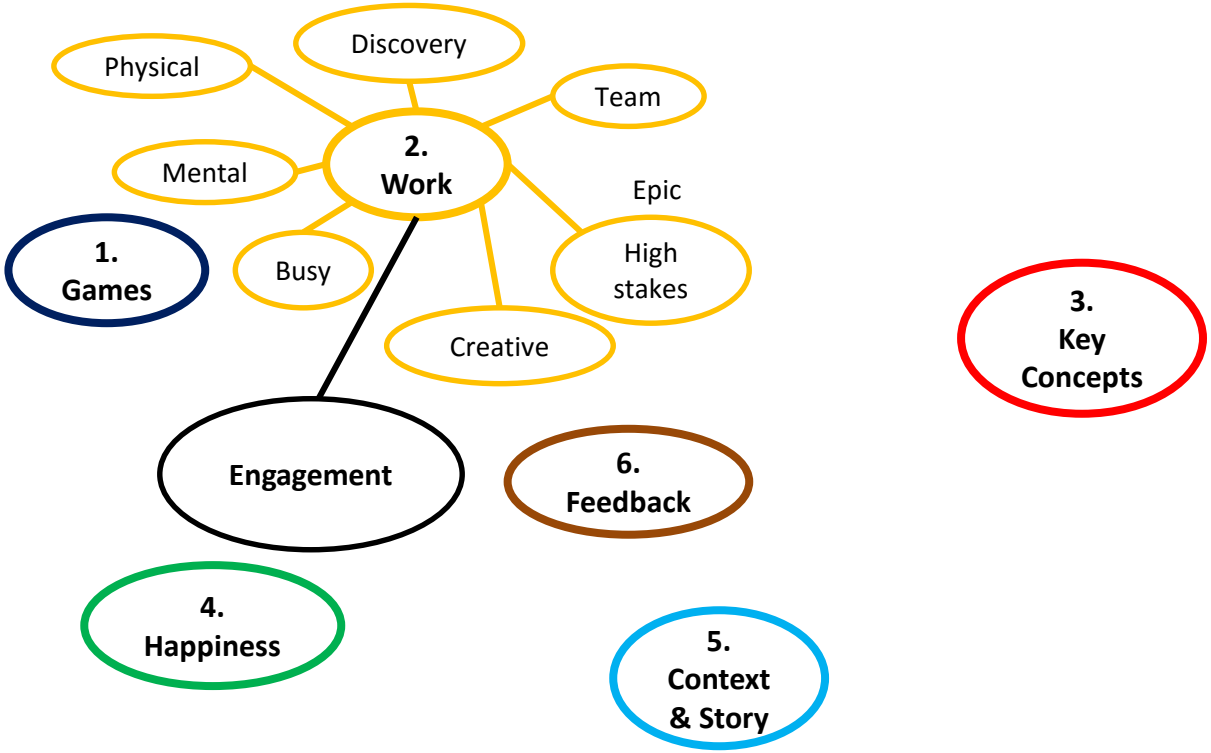
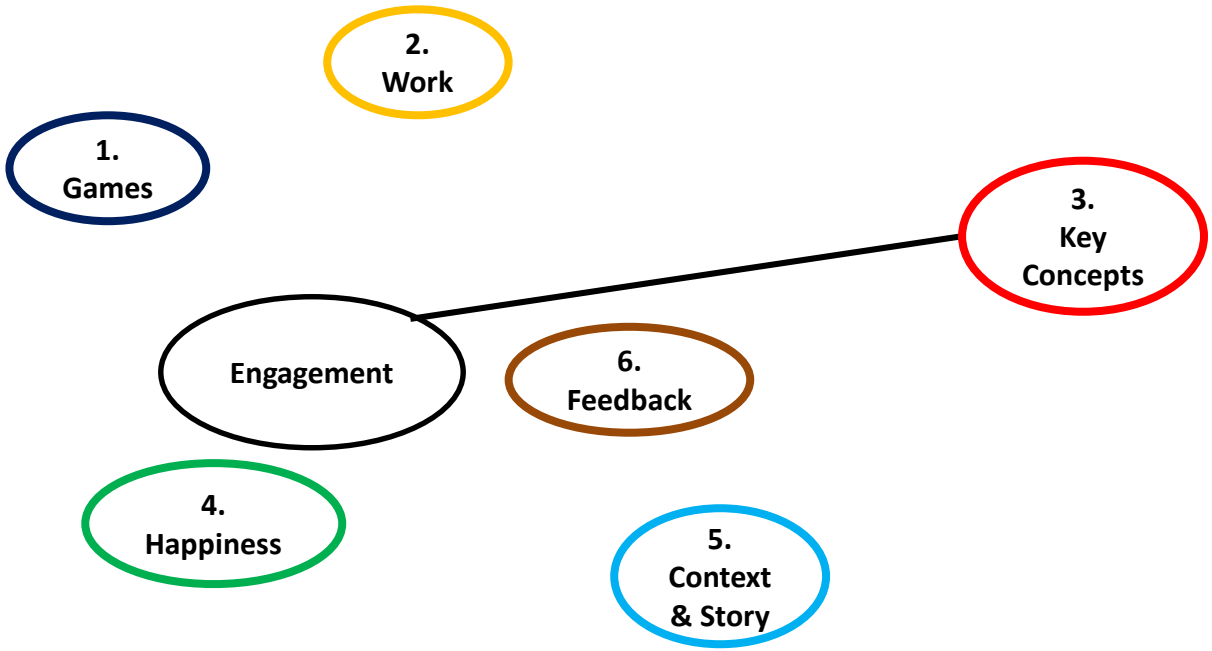


"Work is more fun than fun." (Noel Coward)

"The opposite of play isn't work. It's depression." (Brian Sutton-Smith)
Depression = *a pessimistic sense of inadequacy, and despondent lack of activity.*
Reverse = *an optimistic sense of our own capabilities, and an invigorating rush of activity* = **gameplay**

High-stakes work: save the world!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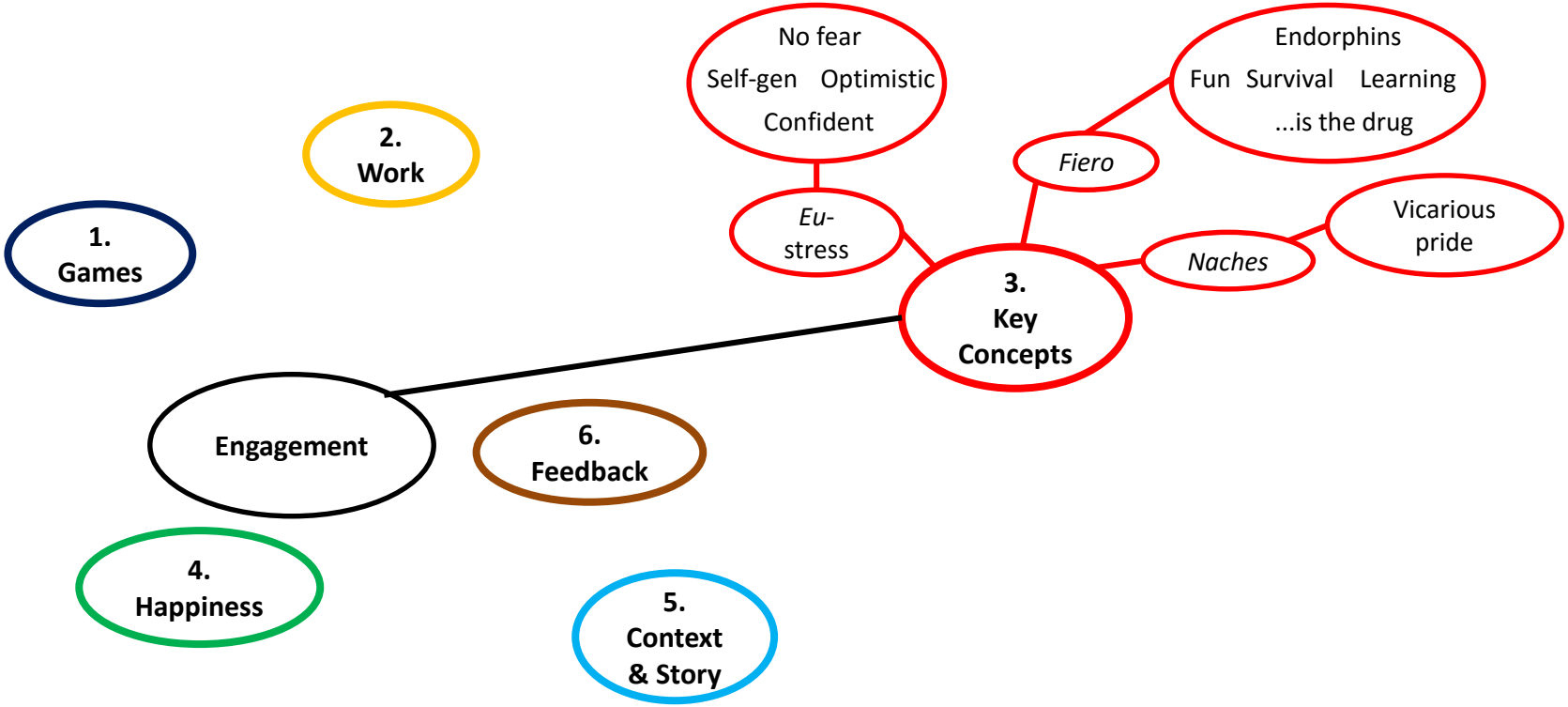
No fear
Self-gen Optimistic
Confident
Endorphins
Fun Survival Learning
...is the drug
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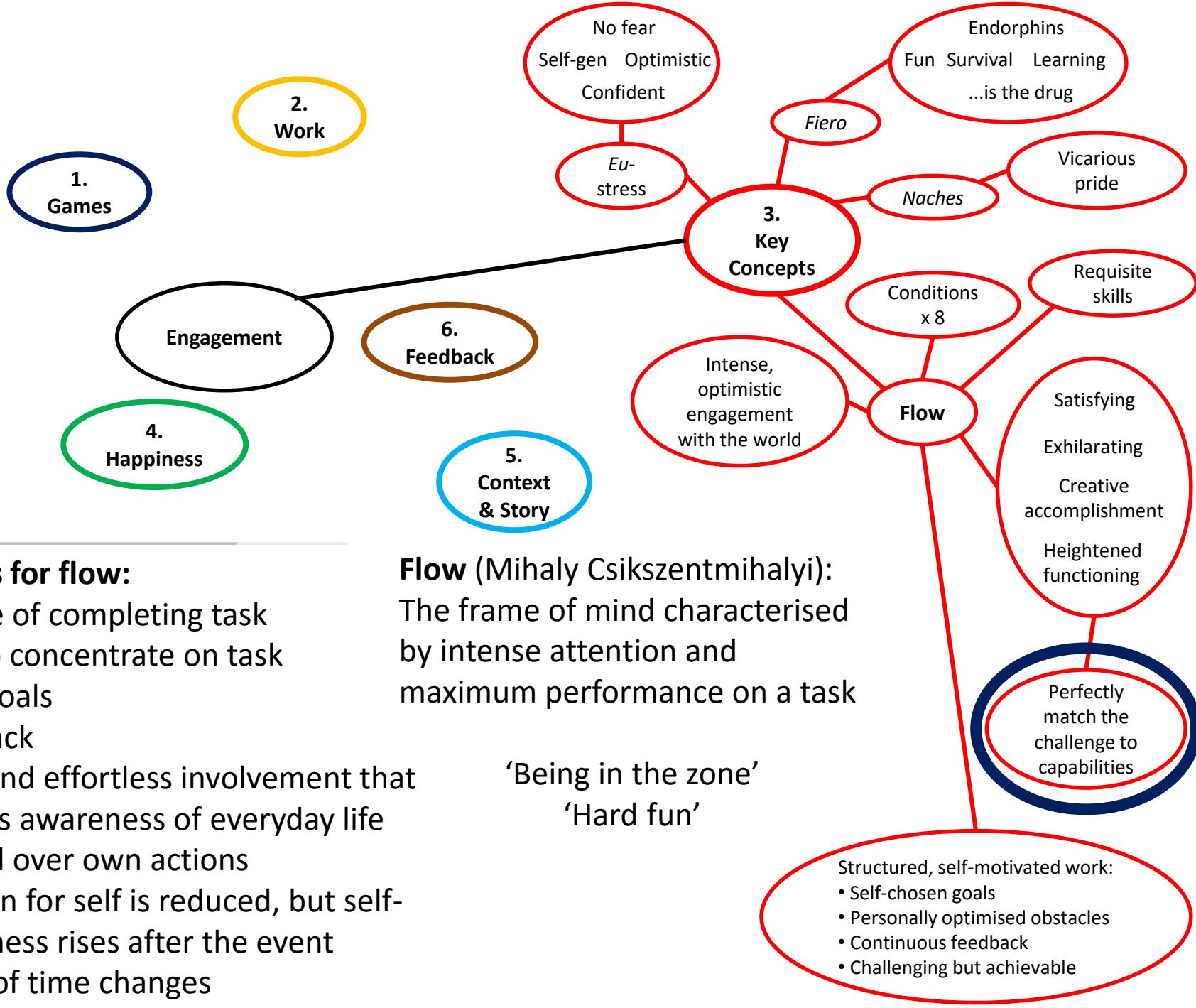
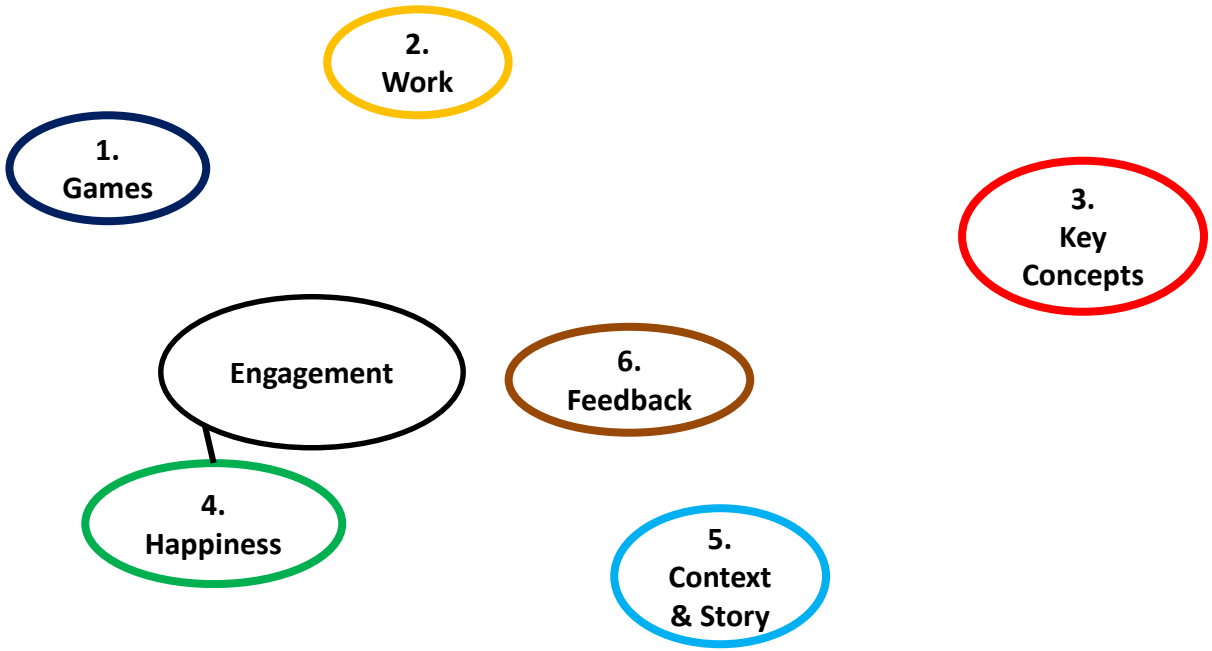


Conditions for flow:

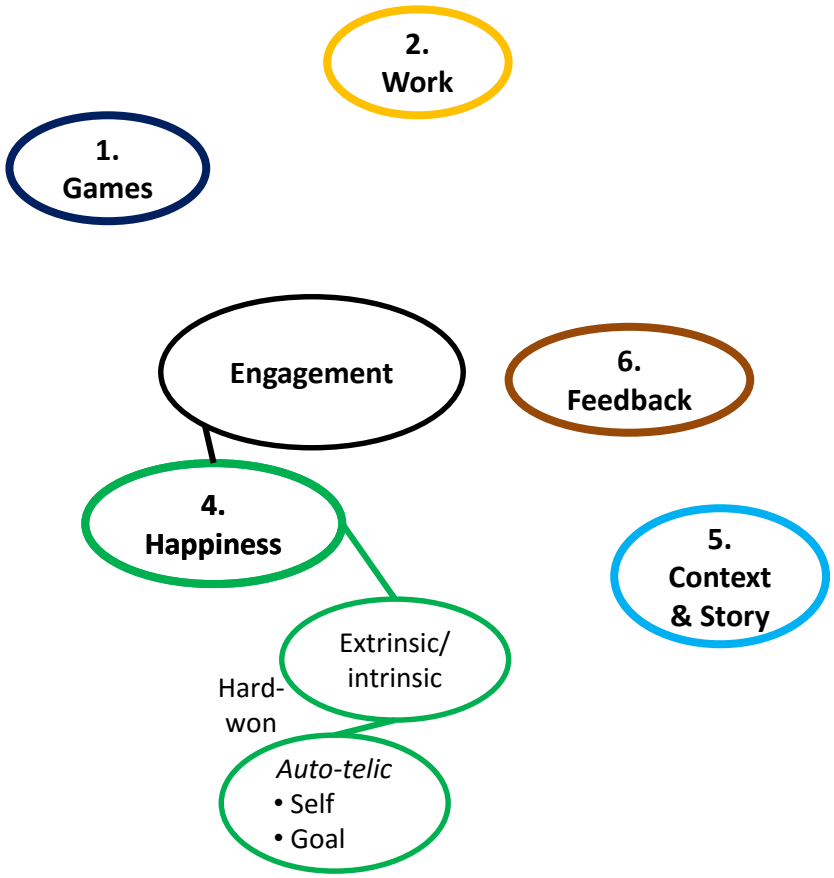
1. Chance of completing task
2. Able to concentrate on task
3. Clear goals
4. Feedback
5. Deep and effortless involvement that reduces awareness of everyday life
6. Control over own actions
7. Concern for self is reduced, but self-awareness rises after the event
8. Sense of time changes

Flow (Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi):
The frame of mind characterised by intense attention and maximum performance on a task

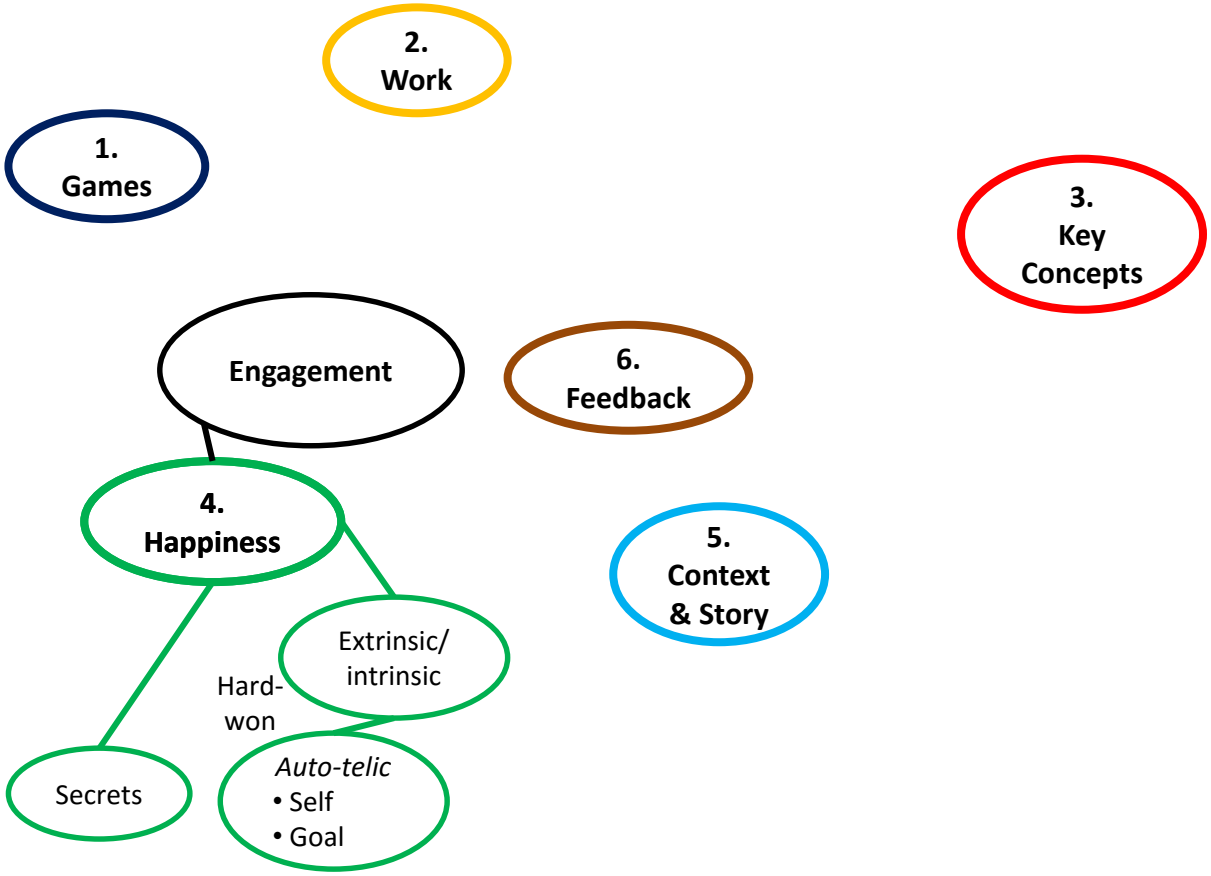
'Being in the zone'
'Hard fun'



See Jane McGonical's 'Reality is Broken – why games make us better and how they can change the world'



The durability of happiness activities comes about when they are hard-won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Extrinsic/
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Hard-
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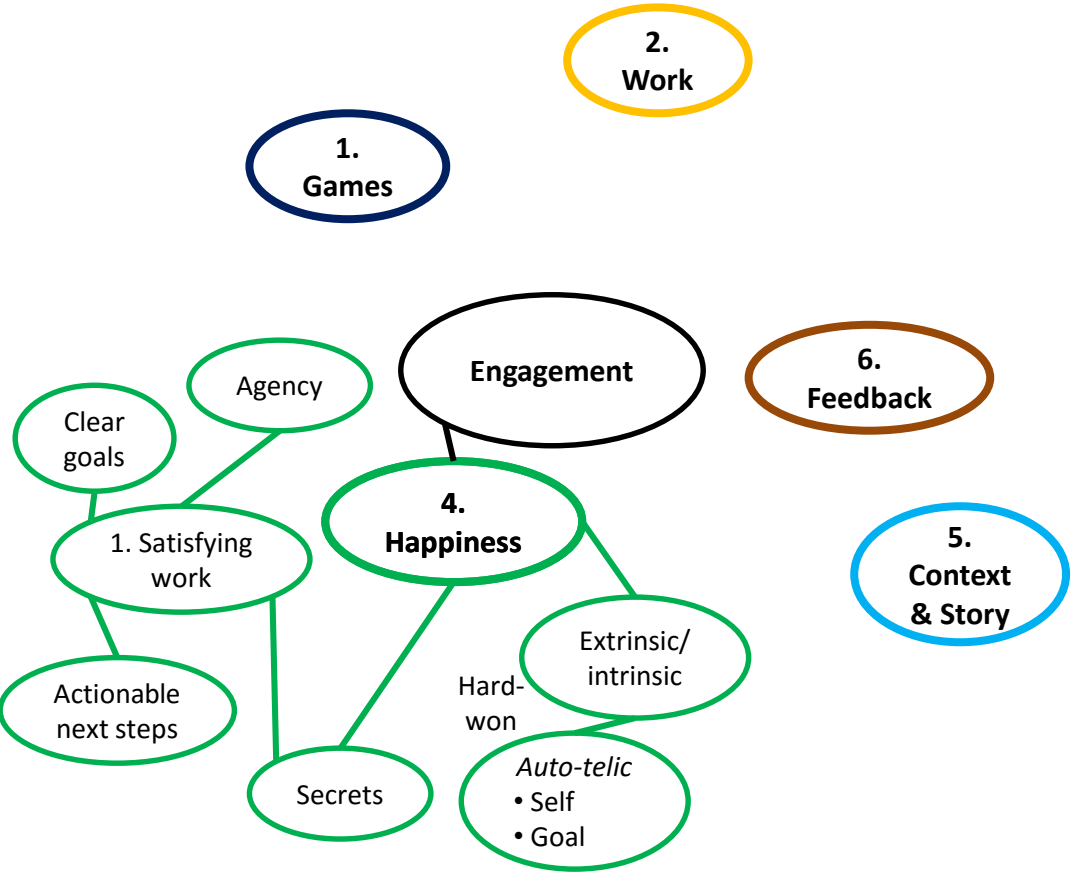
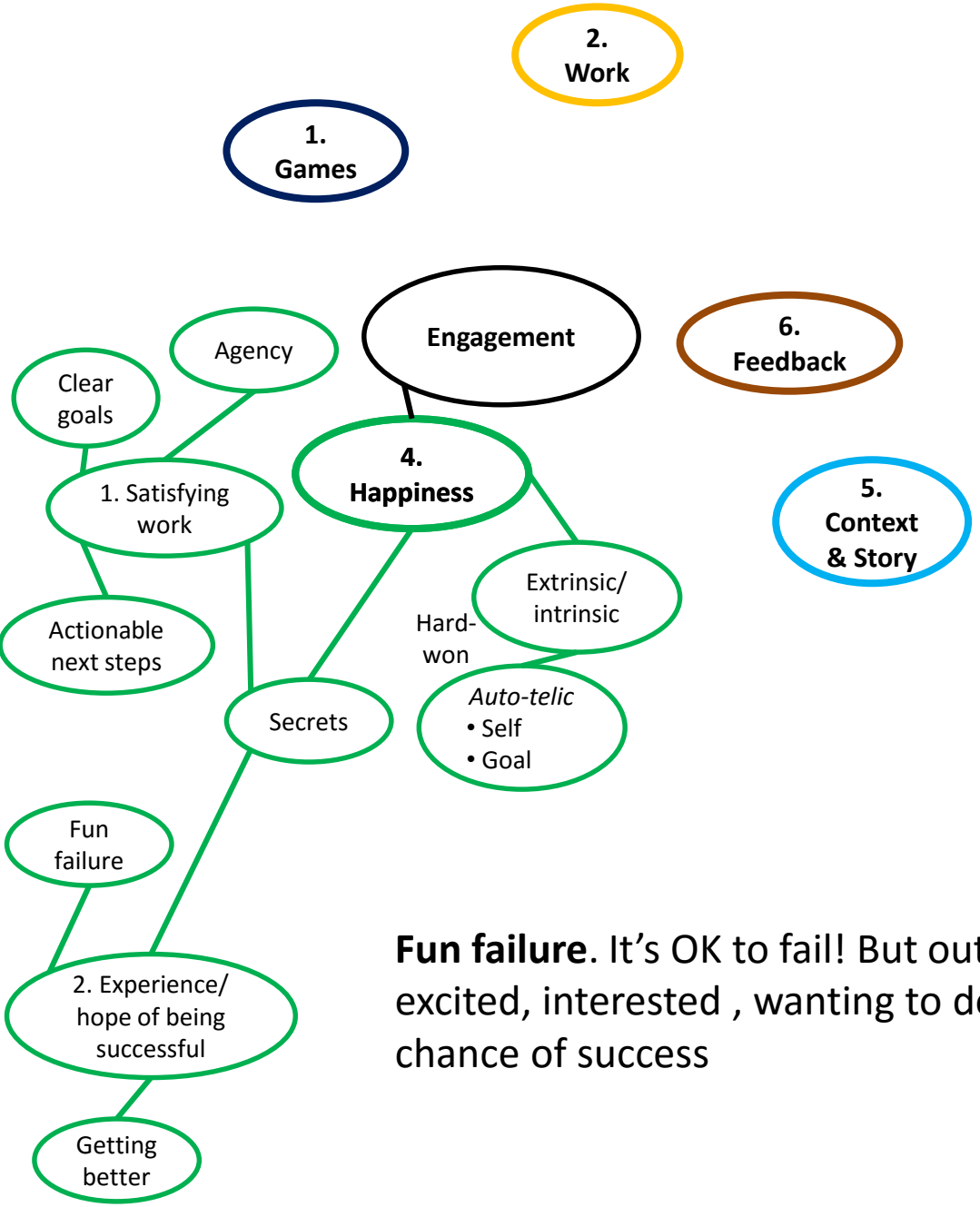
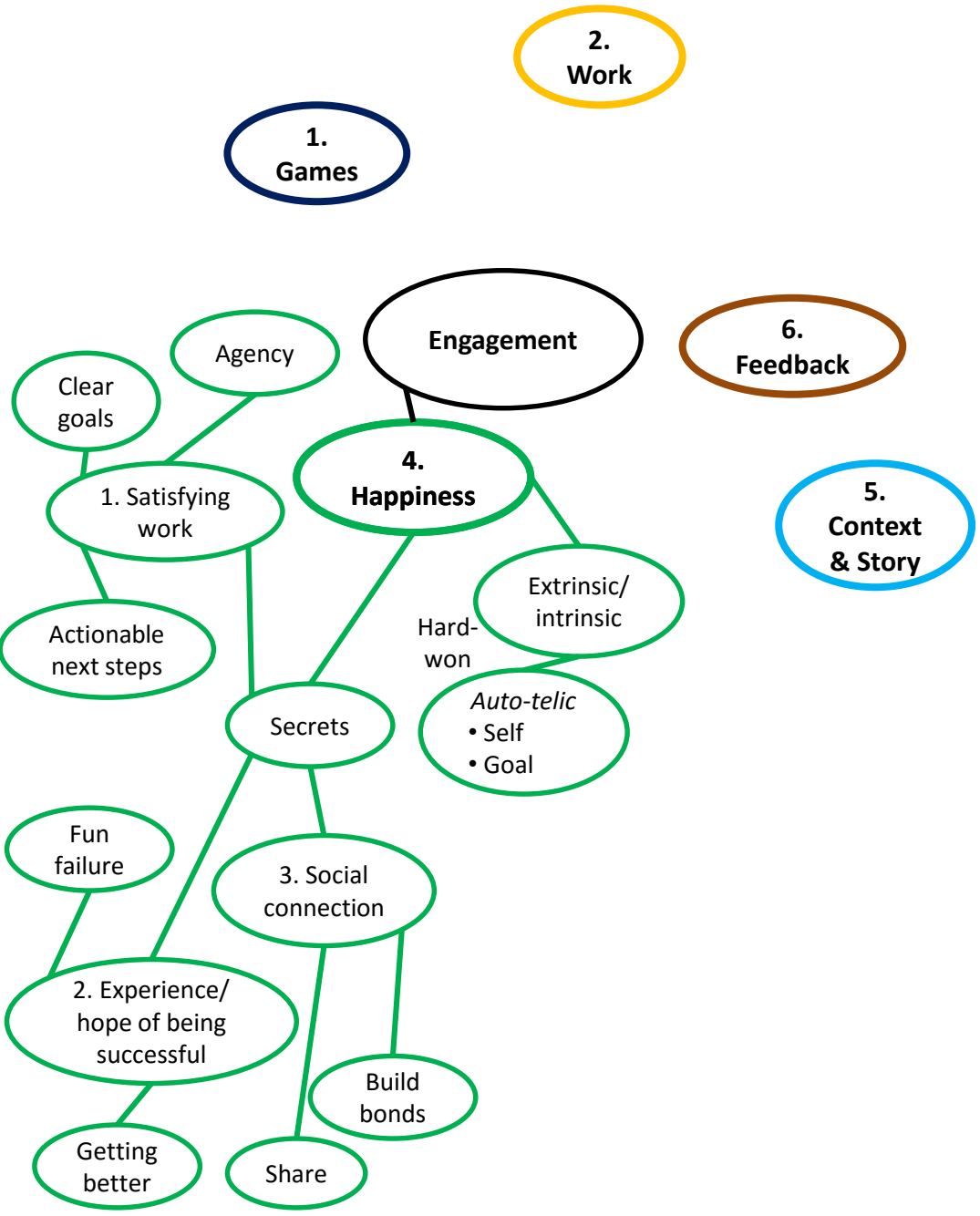
Secrets
Auto-telic
• Self
• Goal



Satisfying work. Being immersed in clearly defined, demanding activities that allow us to see the direct impact of our efforts



Fun failure. It's OK to fail! But outcomes have to be fair. And make us excited, interested , wanting to do better – and optimistic about the chance of success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1. Satisfying
work
Extrinsic/
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Secrets
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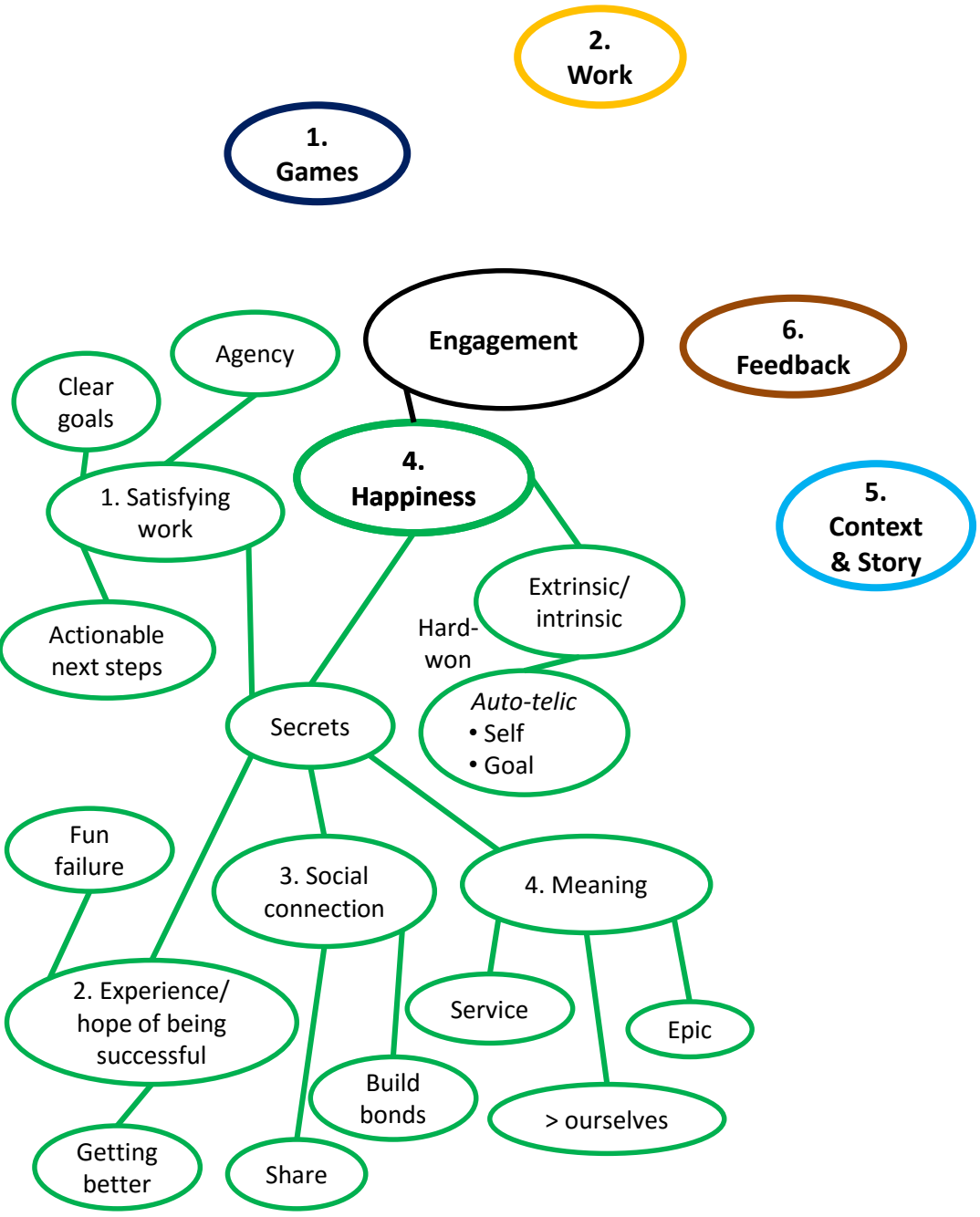
• Self
• Goal
Fun
failure
3. Social
connection
2. Experience/
hope of being
successful
Build
bonds
Getting
better
Share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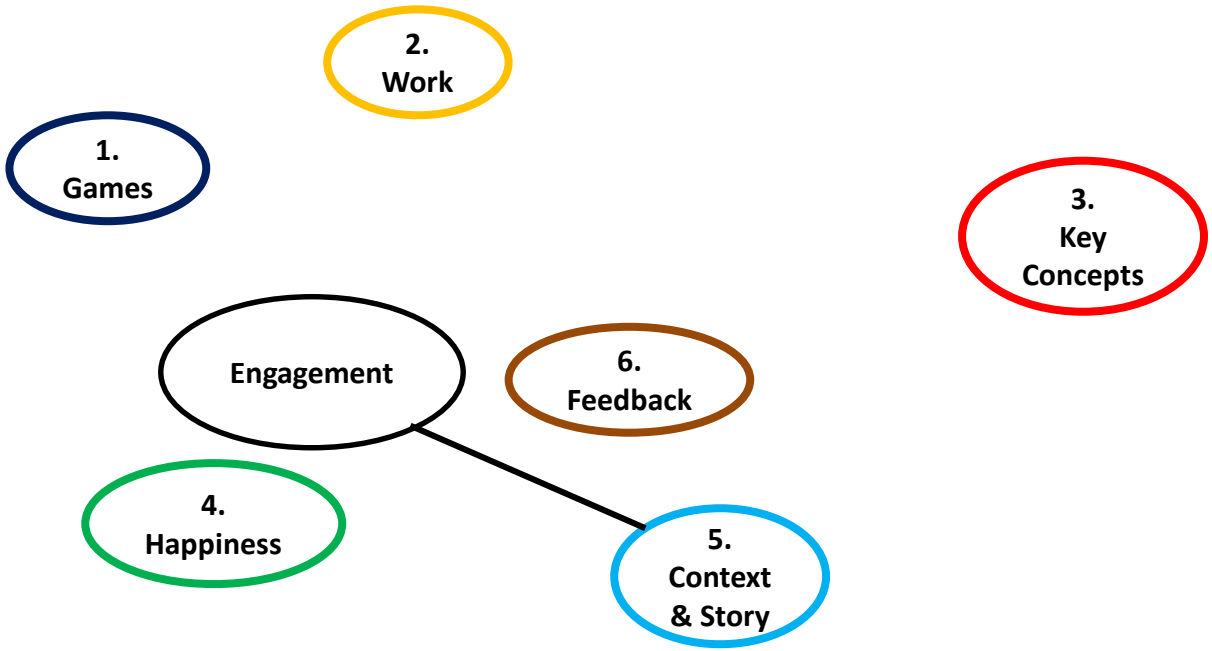
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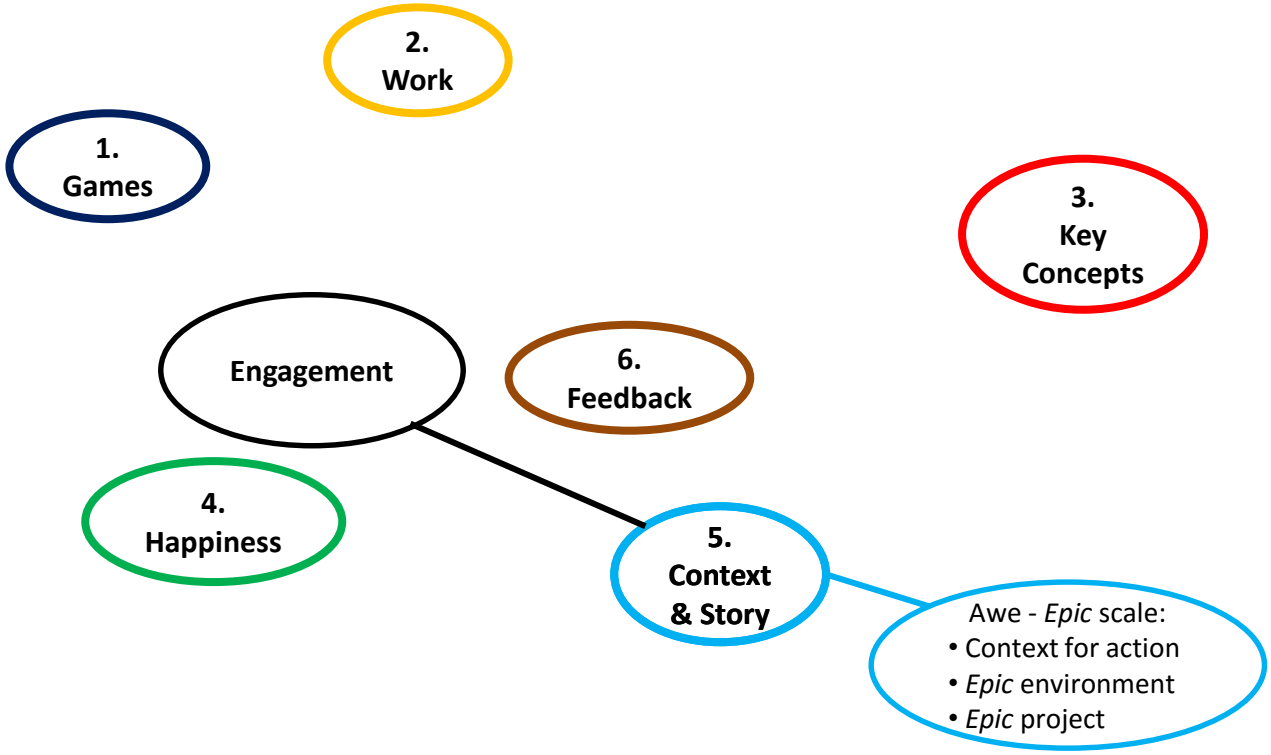
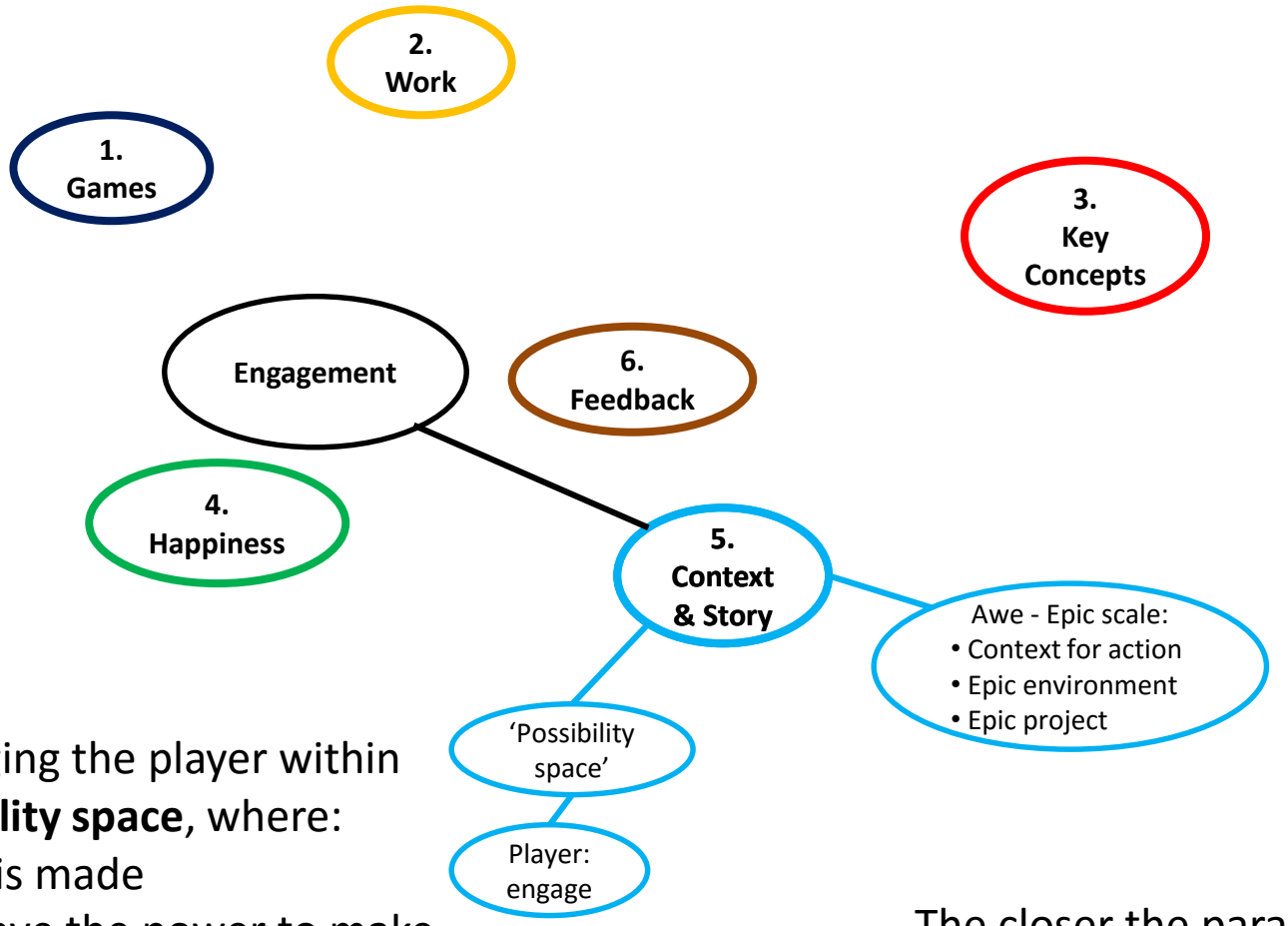


Awe (the biggest positive emotion),**'ambient wonder'**, **delight** and aesthetic appreciation: 'sensawunda'

Epic scale bestows the power to "act with meaning: to do something that matters in a bigger picture. The story is the bigger picture; the player's actions are what matter." (Jane McGonigal)

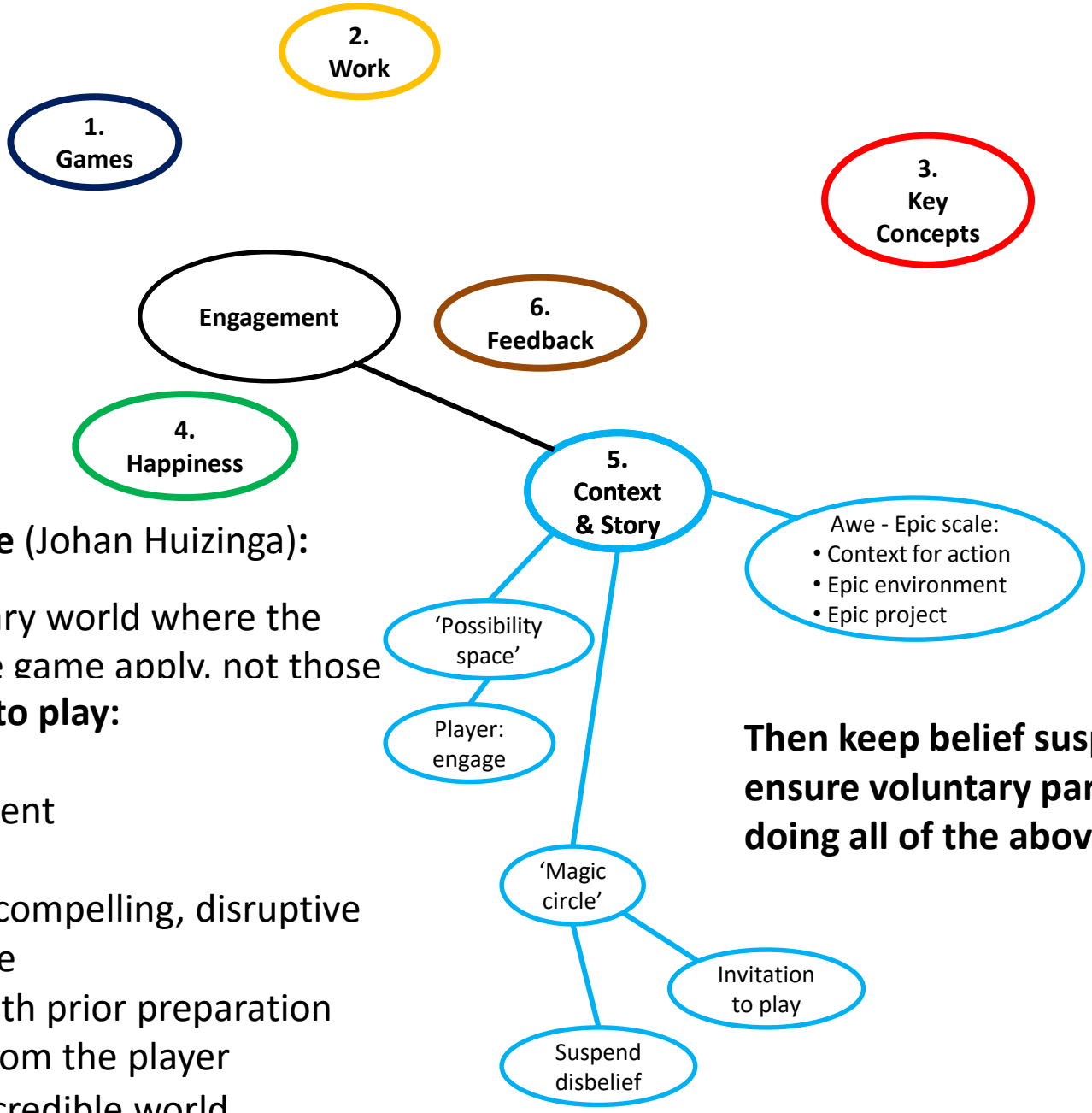


Fully engaging the player within the **possibility space**, where:

- Meaning is made
- Players have the power to make choices within lots of possibilities
- People can be sent to places you can't go in real life
- Players and their experiences are put first
- Players author their own experiences
- Events are visceral and compelling

The closer the parallels with reality, the greater the engagement

Wargames are a low-risk place where you can try high-risk things



Magic circle (Johan Huizinga)**:**

"A temporary world where the rules of the game apply, not those

Invitation to play:

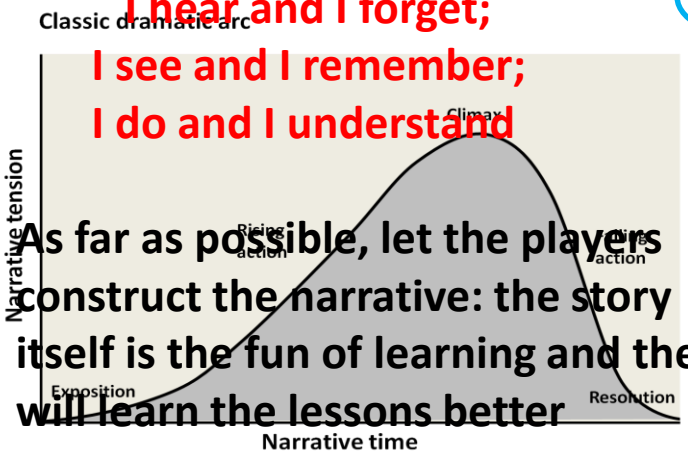
- Key moment
- Ritual
- Visceral, compelling, disruptive and strange
- Ideally with prior preparation required from the player
- Rich and credible world

Then keep belief suspended and ensure voluntary participation by doing all of the above!

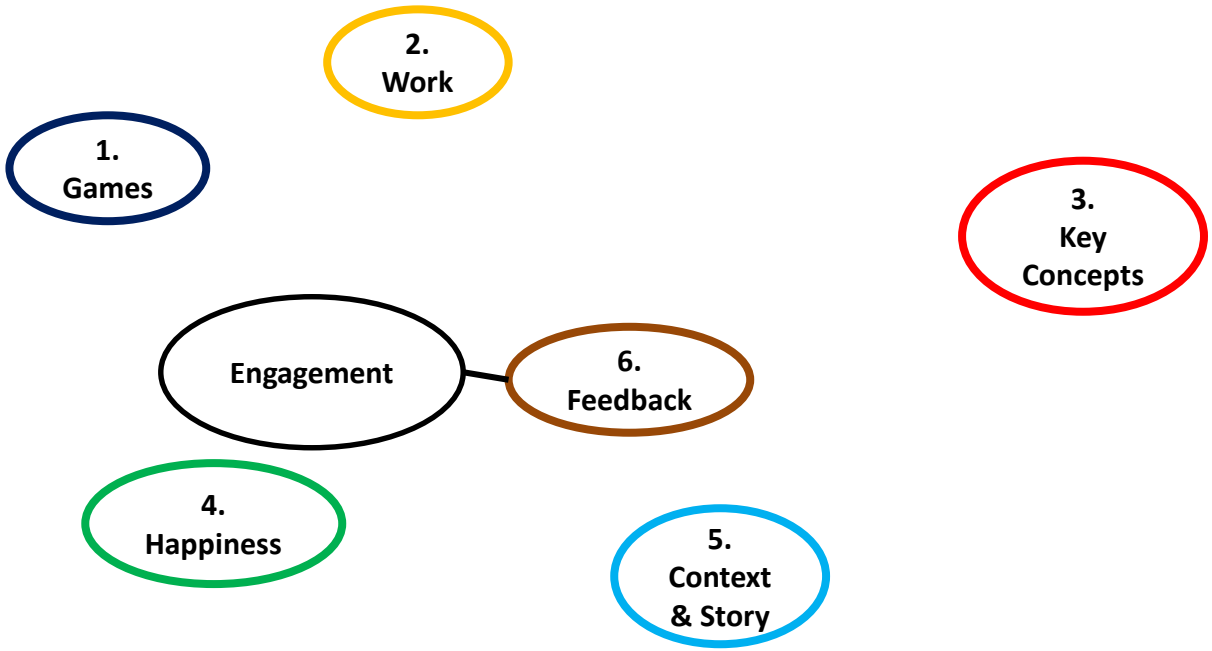
Constructed vs. Presented Narrative

'Story-living'

I hear and I forget;
I see and I remember;
I do and I understand



As far as possible, let the players construct the narrative: the story itself is the fun of learning and they will learn the lessons better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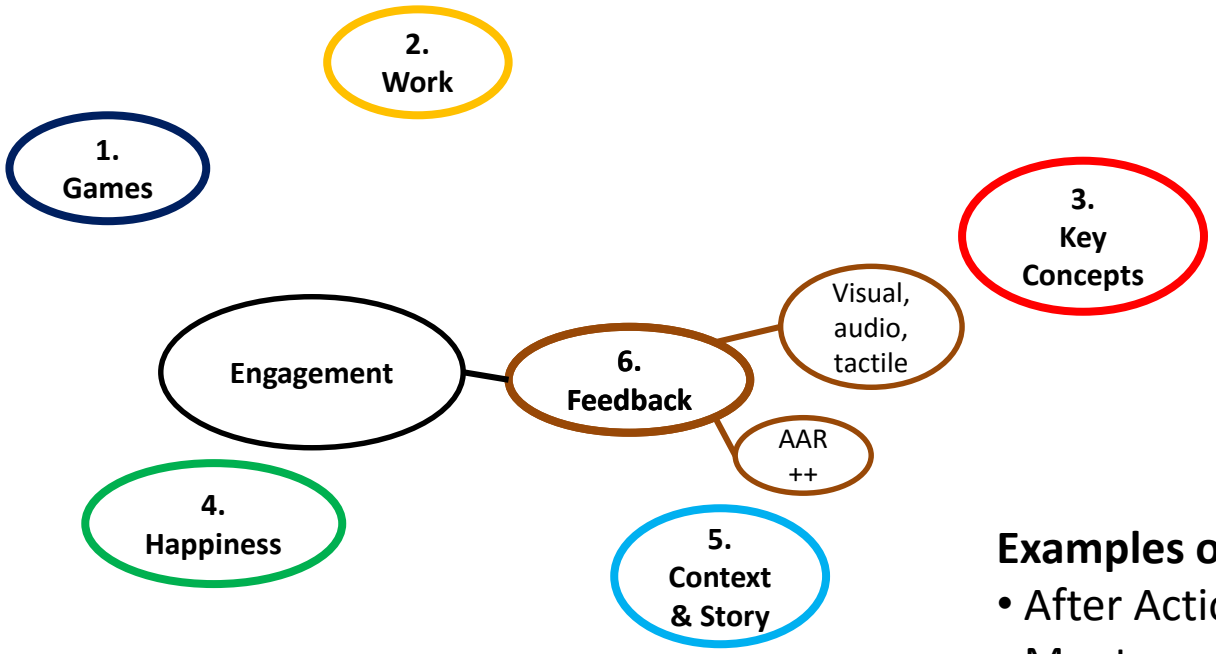


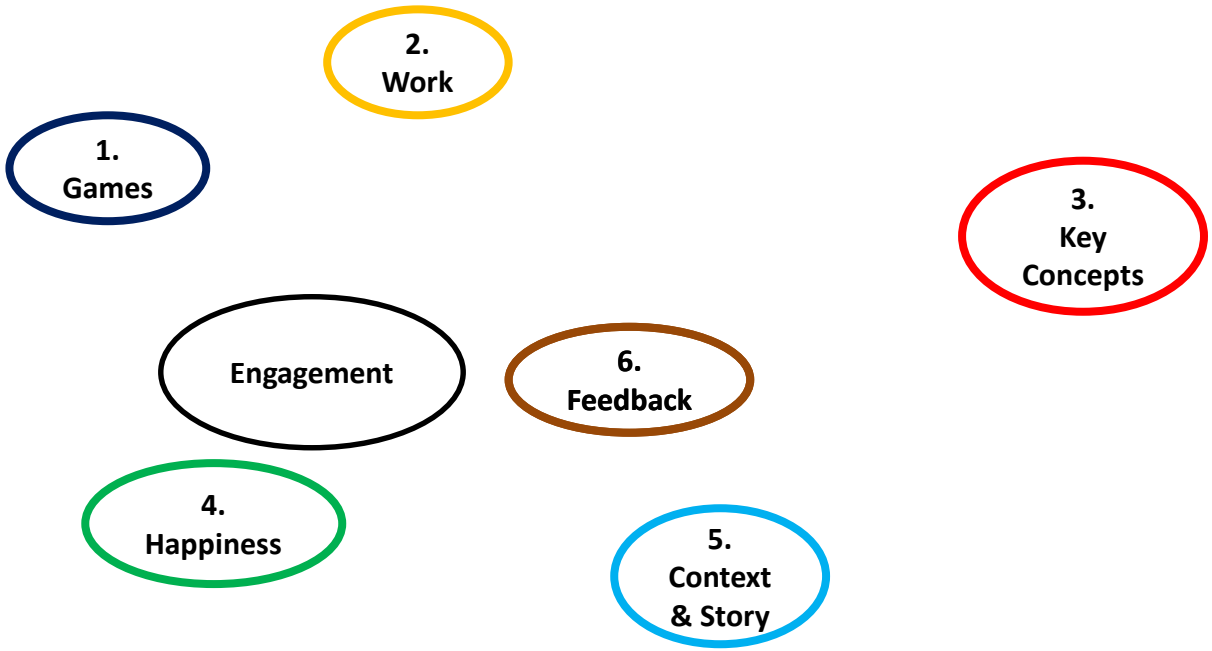
Feedback:

- Frequent, direct and vivid
- Multiple sources e.g. gameplay, role-play, mentors etc
- Multi-sensory
- Players facing the consequences of their own decisions

"Effective feedback occurs *during* learning, while there is still time to act on it."
(Jan Chappuis)

Examples of Feedback:

- After Action Review/'hot wash'
- Mentor comments
- Successes and failures in the ongoing operation
- Visible changes on the Common Operations Picture
- Successes and failures in meetings and role-play
- Etc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In summary...

Positive emotions
Org around a voluntary obstacle
1. Games
Traits and elements
Physical
Discovery
Team
Mental
2. Work
Busy
Epic
High stakes
Creative
No fear
Self-gen Optimistic
Confident
Eu-stress
Endorphins
Fun Survival Learning
...is the drug
Fiero
Vicarious pride
Naches
3. Key Concepts
Visual,
Conditions
Requisite skills
‘Everything in war(gaming) is simple, but doing the simplest thing is difficult.’
Clausewitz
Clear goals
Actionable next steps
Extrinsic/ intrinsic
Hard-won
Auto-telic
• Self
• Goal
‘Possibility space’
Player: engage
• Context for action
• Epic environment
• Epic project
Heightened functioning
Secrets
Constructed narrative
Internalised learning
Story:
• Uncertain outcome
• Conflict and tension
• Emerges from gameplay
• Dramatic arc
Perfectly match the challenge to capabilities
Fun failure
3. Social connection
4. Meaning
‘Magic circle’
2. Experience/ hope of being successful
Service
Epic
Invitation to play
Build bonds
> ourselves
Suspend disbelief
Getting better
Share
Structured, self-motivated work:
• Self-chosen goals
• Personally optimised obstacles
• Continuous feedback
• Challenging but achievable

Questions?

Graham Longley-Brown