



SYMPATHETIC JOY (Interactive activity)

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Time needed:

~15-20 minutes

Why you should try this activity:

We know the intense pace at U-M, where competition, comparison, and humble bragging can also lead to jealousy, envy, and resentment. One way we can bolster positive high regard for self and others is by practicing sympathetic joy and resilience, which are skills that can be learned and practiced.

“[Sympathetic joy is sometimes called appreciative joy, empathic joy, vicarious reward, or (more broadly) positive empathy]. By whatever name, it’s the unadulterated goodness we feel when something good happens for someone else.” Jeremy Adam Smith (Greater Good Science Center)

Learning Outcomes:

- Practice of sympathetic joy
- Resilience skills
- Community building

Pre-game consideration:

What does cheering on someone look like?

What does supporting someone look like?

Activity:

1. Ask students to get into pairs. Be sure to have the pairs introduce each other before they begin.
2. Students will play the traditional game of rock, paper, scissors. Best two out of three wins. The players say good game afterward, acknowledging courtesy, respect and appreciation for each other, whether they won or lost.



3. The winner of the best out of three rounds will advance to a new partner, and the partner who

lost will become their cheerleader and follow them around, audibly cheering for them and support them in the next round of play with a new opponent. until the end

4. As each partner group will win or lose, the 'cheerleaders' will follow behind and cheer and support for who they lost to until there are only two people left
5. By the end, there should be two people left with large groups of every previous competitors behind them cheering them on.

Discussion questions:

1. What was it like to lose? Or Win?
2. What was it like to cheer for or support your opponent after losing? Or being supported if you won?
3. What emotions did you notice in yourself and others?
4. What stress were you experiencing?
5. How can you show up, celebrate, and encourage people close to you? Outside of your social networks? Or other communities?

Take a quick quiz to learn how sympathetic joy shows up in your life and learn practical ways to strengthen your skills in this area.

- https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/quizzes/take_quiz/sympathetic_joy

Other resources:

- Bergmann, J., & Sams, A. (2014). Flipped learning: Gateway to student engagement and higher-level thinking. *Learning & Leading with Technology*, 41(7), 18-23.
 - Key take-aways from article:
 - Enhanced engagement and motivation
 - Promotes Critical thinking and creativity
 - Facilitates deeper learning and retention
- Nordseth, A. (2024, June). *Experiencing sympathetic joy promotes cooperation and deepens connections*. Discover Magazine.
<https://www.discovermagazine.com/mind/experiencing-sympathetic-joy-promotes-cooperation-and-deepens-connections>
 - Mirror neurons influence connection to others
 - Celebrating others boosts community well-being
 - Sympathetic joy takes practice
- Smith, J. A. (2022, March 22). *What Is Sympathetic Joy and How Can You Feel More of It?* Greater Good. https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/what_is_sympathetic_joy_and_how_can_you_feel_more_of_it
 - Key take-aways from article:
 - Benefits of demonstrating sympathetic joy
 - Challenges in cultivating sympathetic joy
 - Strategies to strengthen sympathetic joy