

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.” (Jane McGonigal)
- “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)

What I'm talking about

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



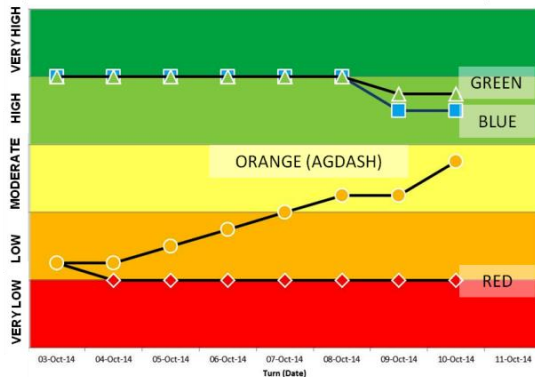
Support for Factions in AGDASH

- 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

- People, their decisions and the resulting story-living
- '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

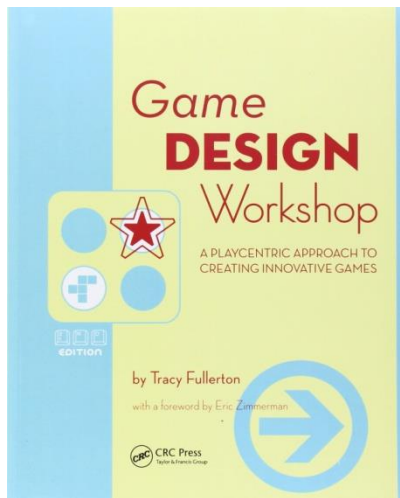
Peter P. Perla and ED McGrady

Peter Perla and
ED McGrady

Wargaming has a long history as an education, and research.¹ In its broadest applications (see, for example, the recent *Business War Games*), the technique is increasingly used among businesses seeking strategic advantage. However, we mean what is called "serious game like gambling."² Despite that history and potential of success is uneven. Some games seem to

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

important decision making in which they later is the U.S. Navy's so 1930s, which helped the Second World War not do so well; for

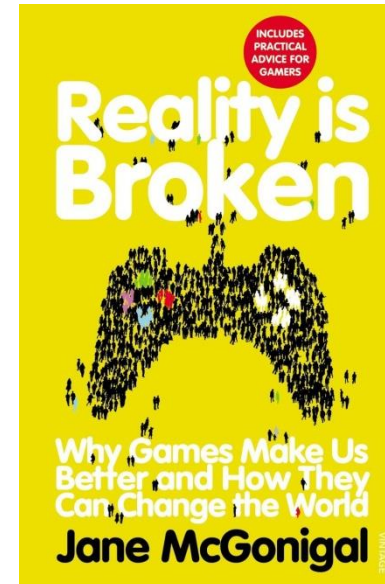
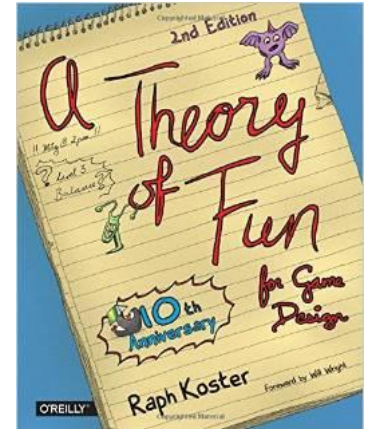


Tracy Fullerton



Katie Salen and
Eric Zimmerman

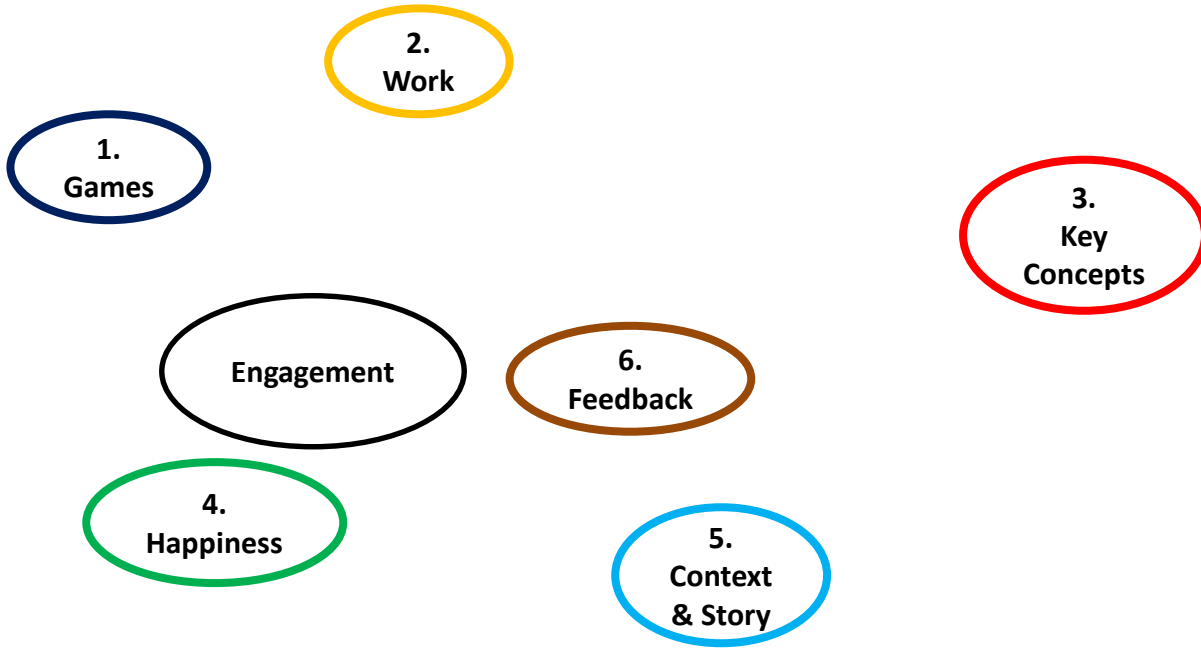
Raph Koster

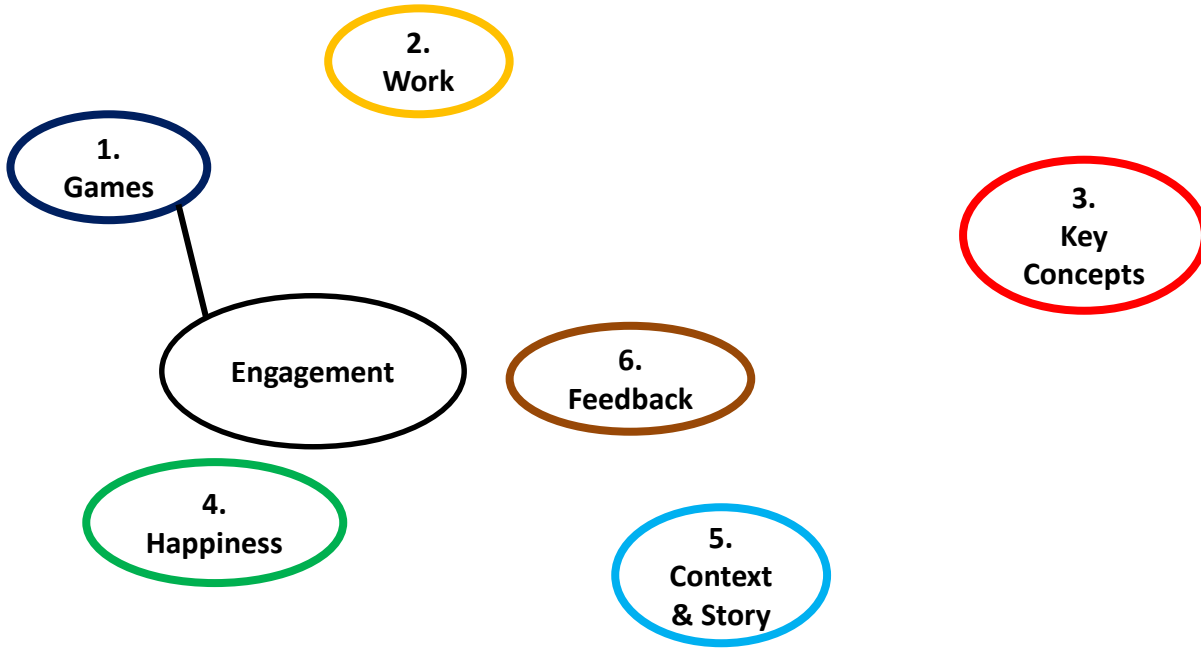


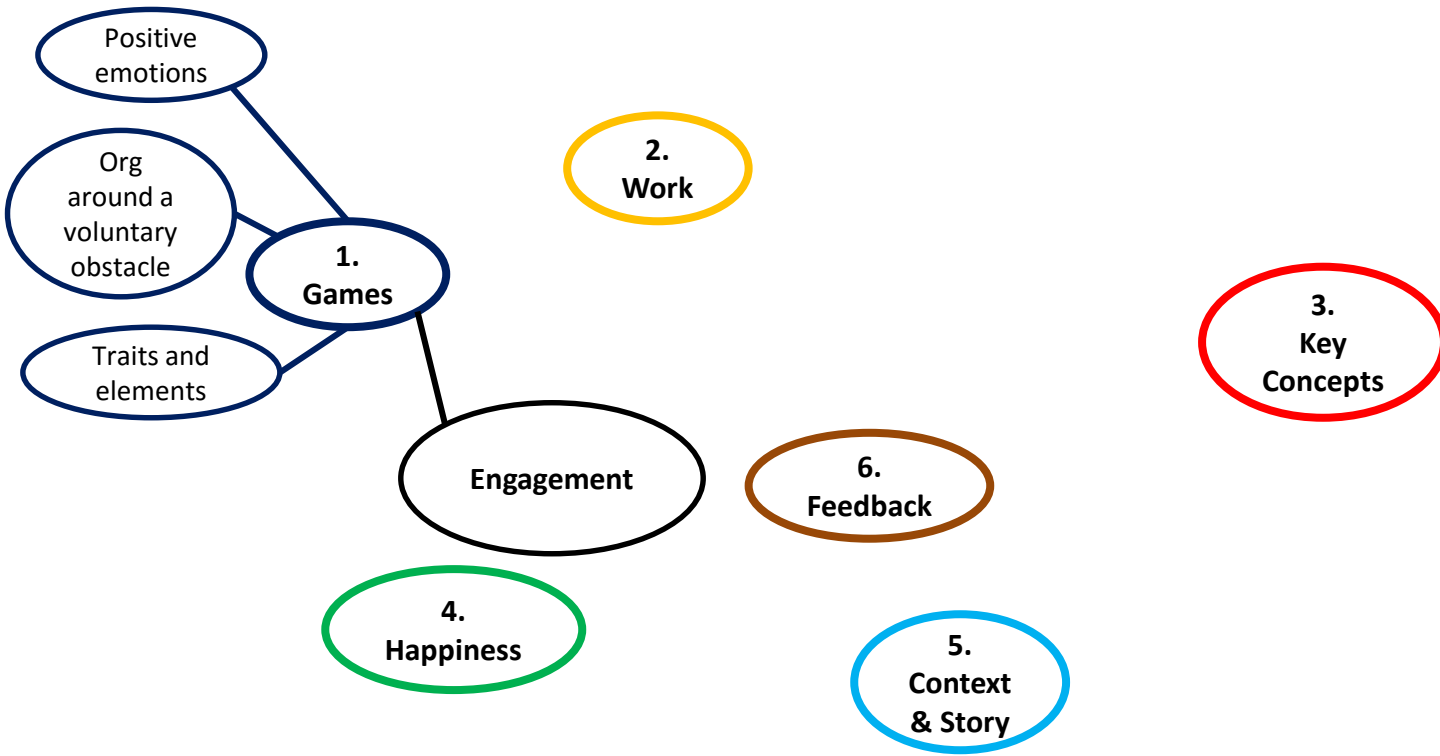
Jane McGonigal

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

Clausewitz-ish







Game traits:

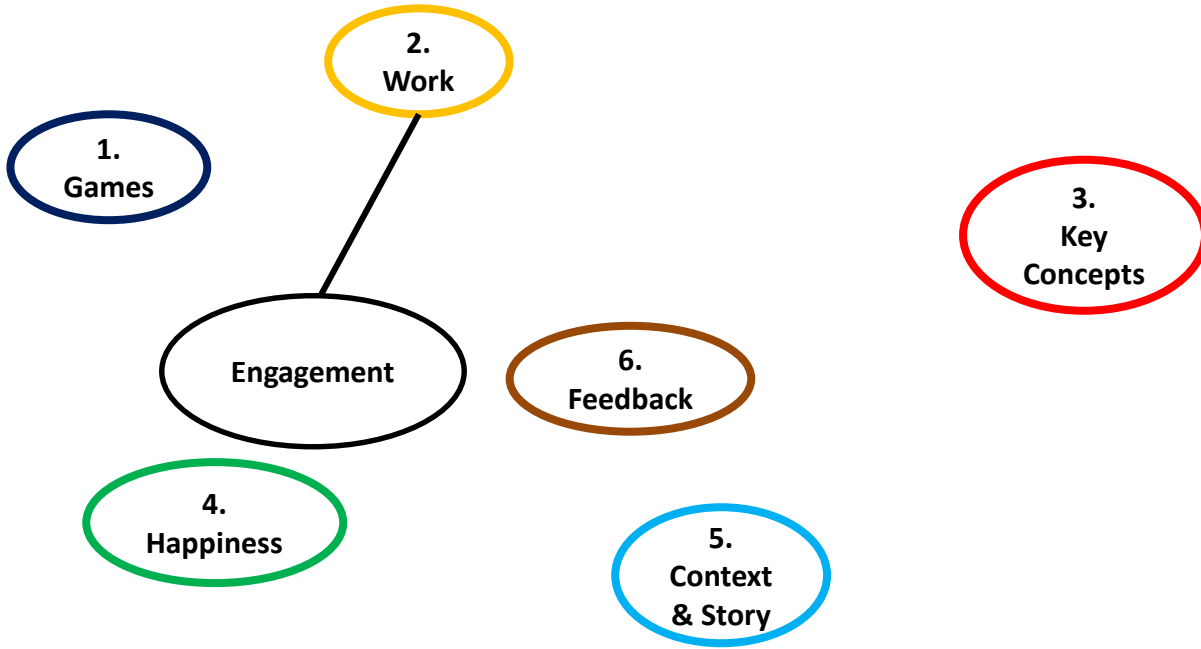
- Goal
- Rules
- Feedback system
- Voluntary participation

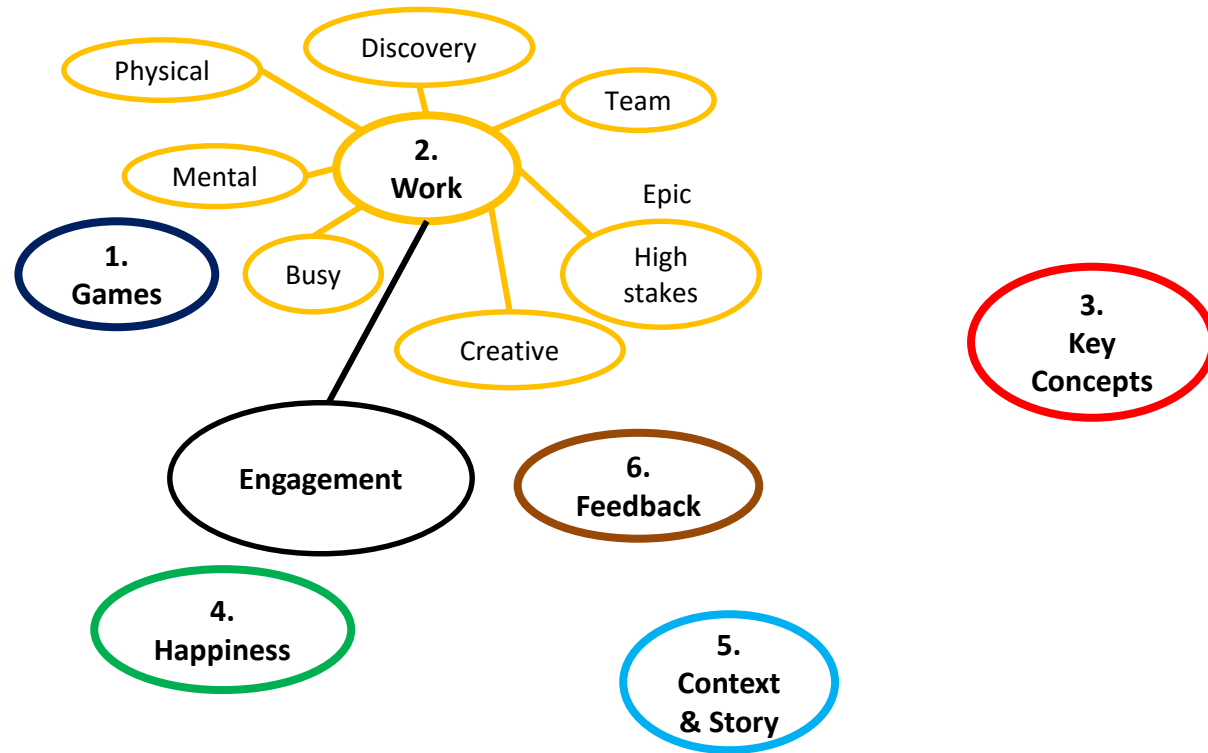
Elements:

- 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)





“Work is more fun than fun.” (Noel Coward)

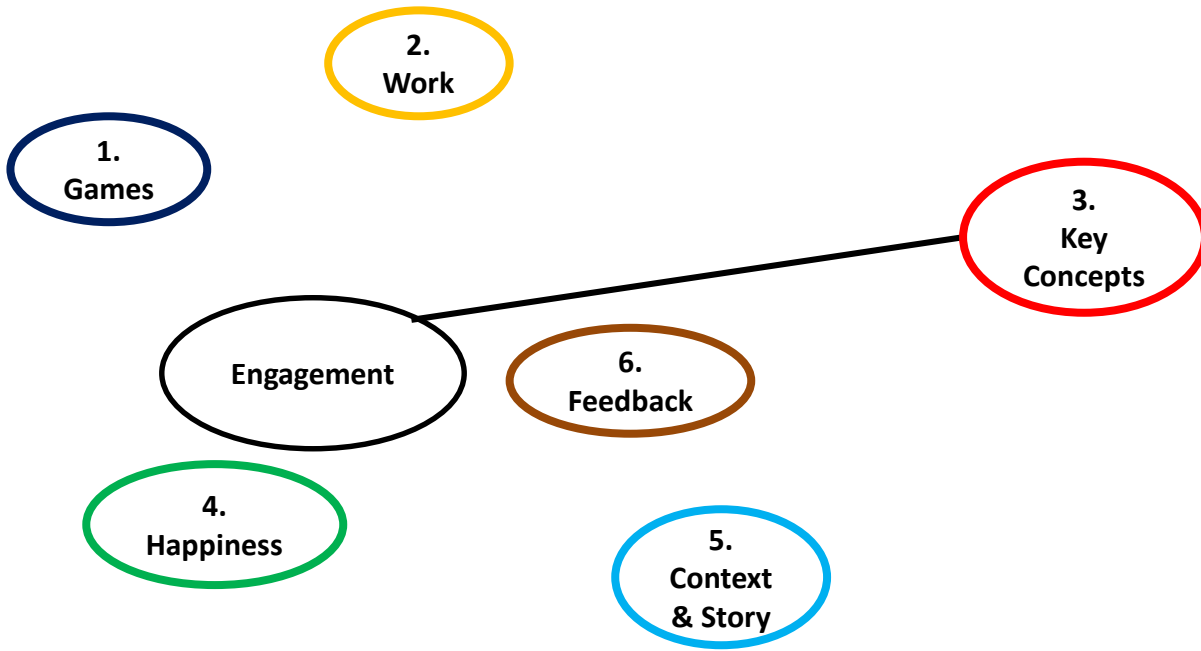
Passive entertainment, low-engagement activities and ‘relaxing’ do not make us feel good (TV, chocolate, shopping etc): **“We’re much happier enlivening time than killing time.”** (Tal Ben-Shahar)

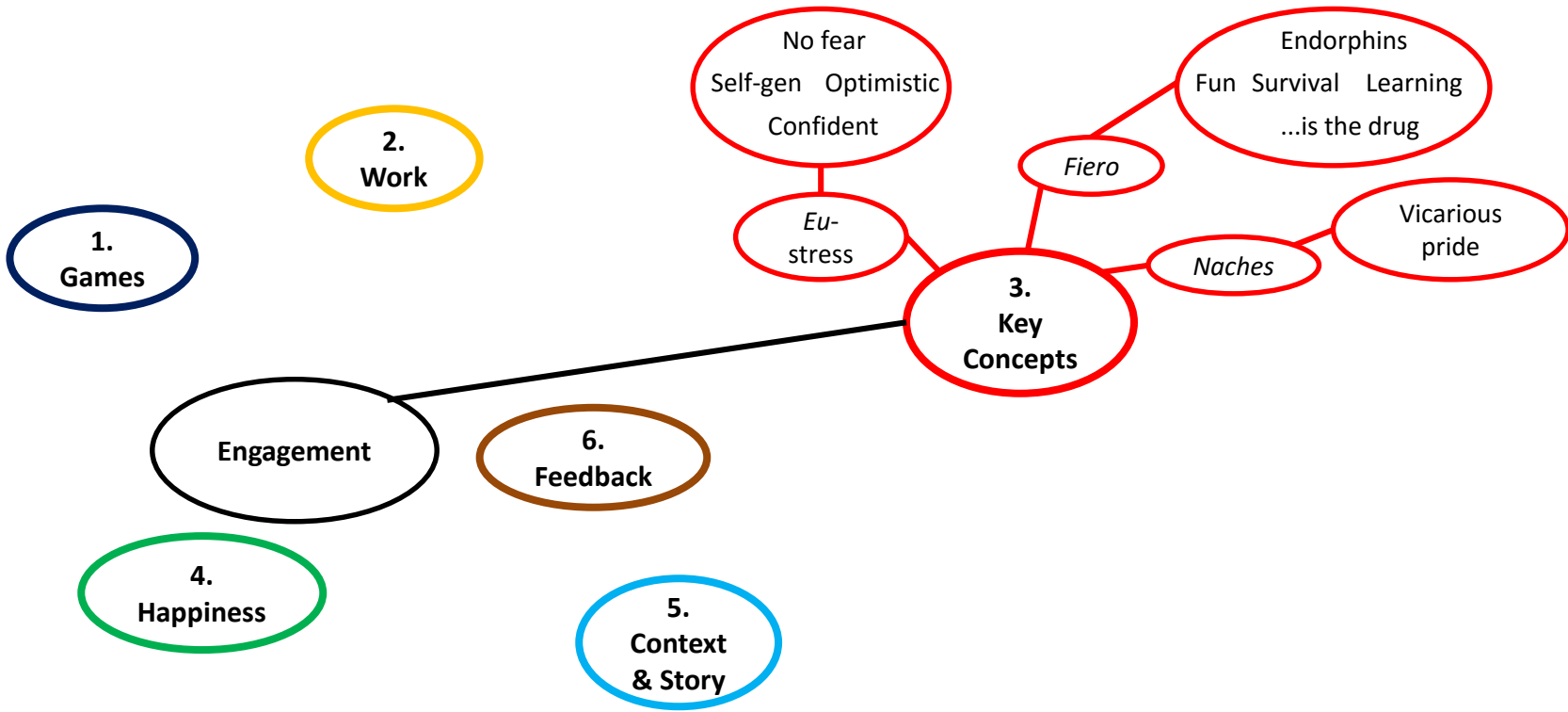
“The opposite of play isn’t work. It’s depression.” (Brian Sutton-Smith)

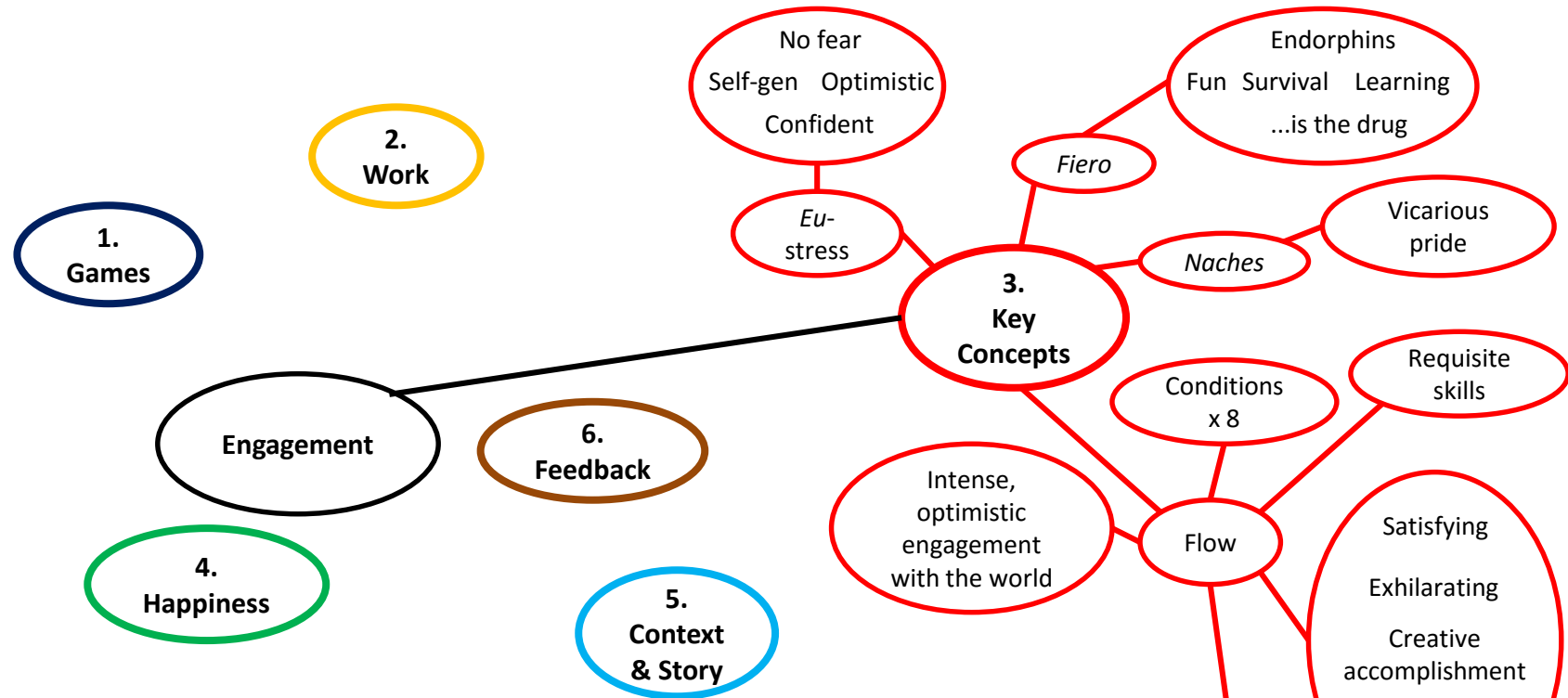
Depression = *a pessimistic sense of inadequacy, and despondent lack of activity.*

Reverse = *an optimistic sense of our own capabilities, and an invigorating rush of activity = gameplay*

High-stakes work: save the world!







Conditions for flow:

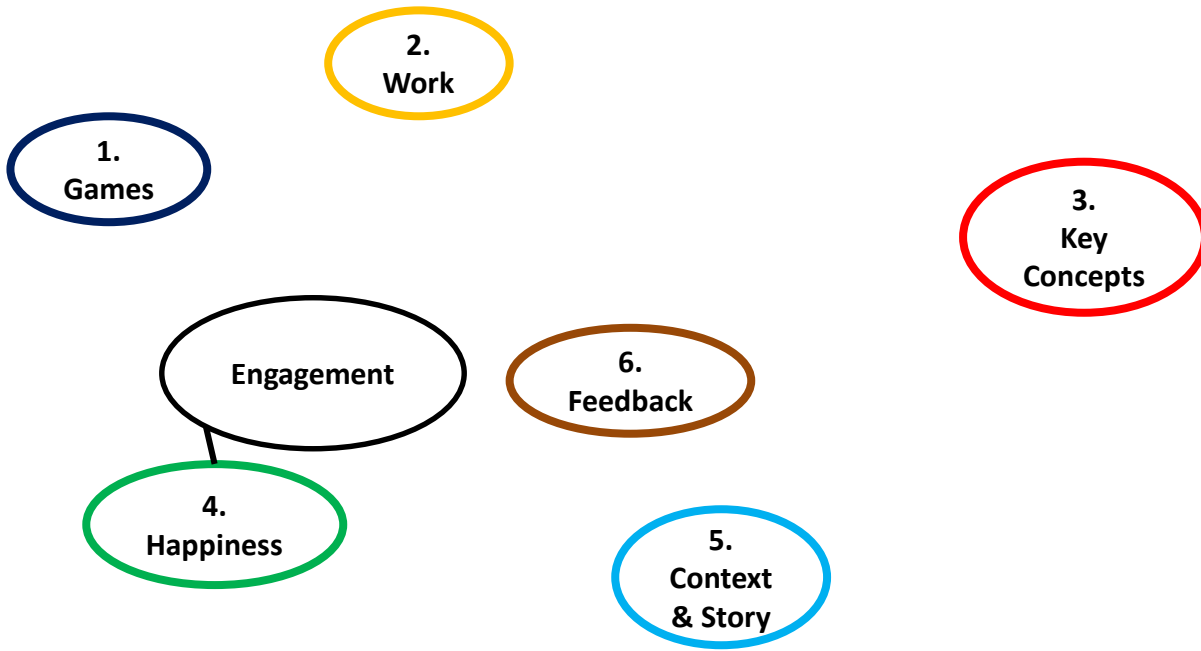
1. Chance of completing task
2. Able to concentrate on task
3. Clear goals
4. Feedback
5. Deep and effortless involvement that reduces awareness of everyday life
6. Control over own actions
7. Concern for self is reduced, but self-awareness rises after the event
8. Sense of time changes

Flow (Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi):

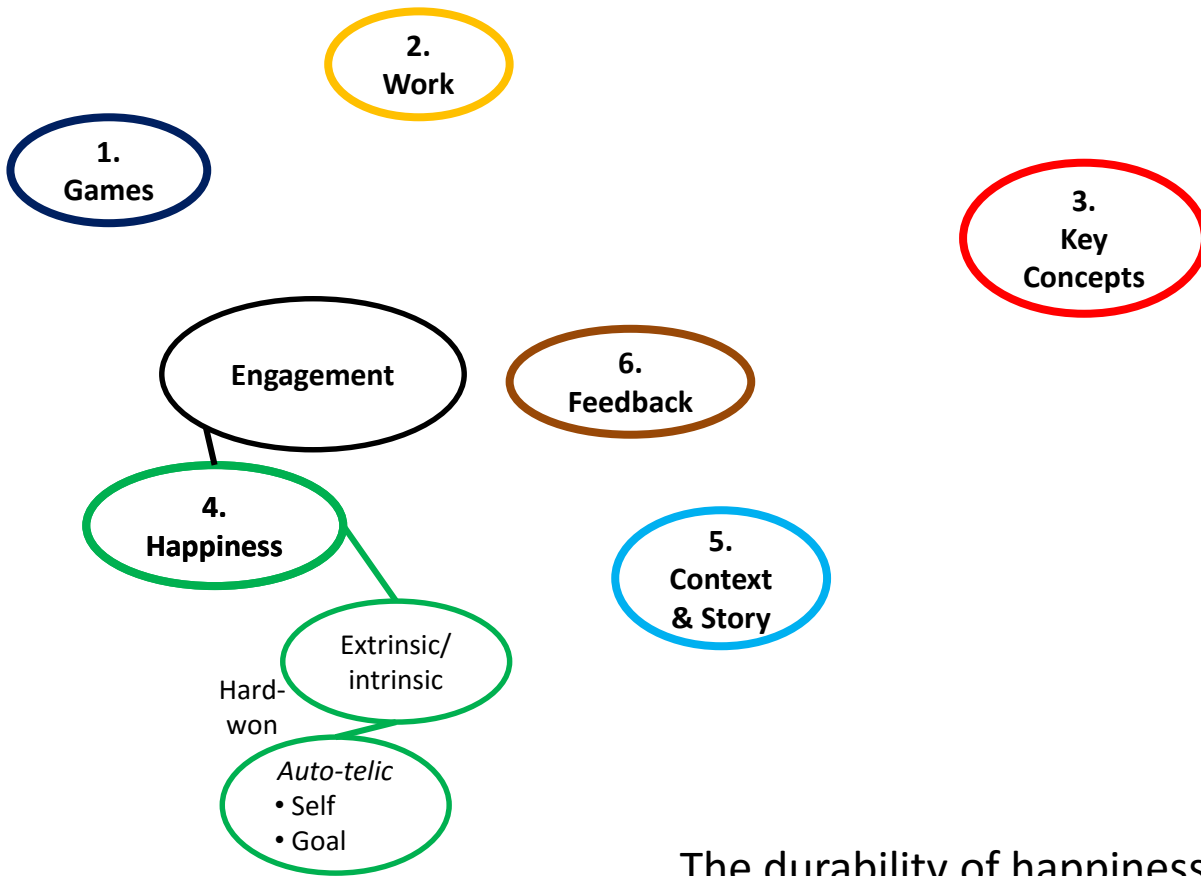
The frame of mind characterised by intense attention and maximum performance on a task

‘Being in the zone’

‘Hard fun’

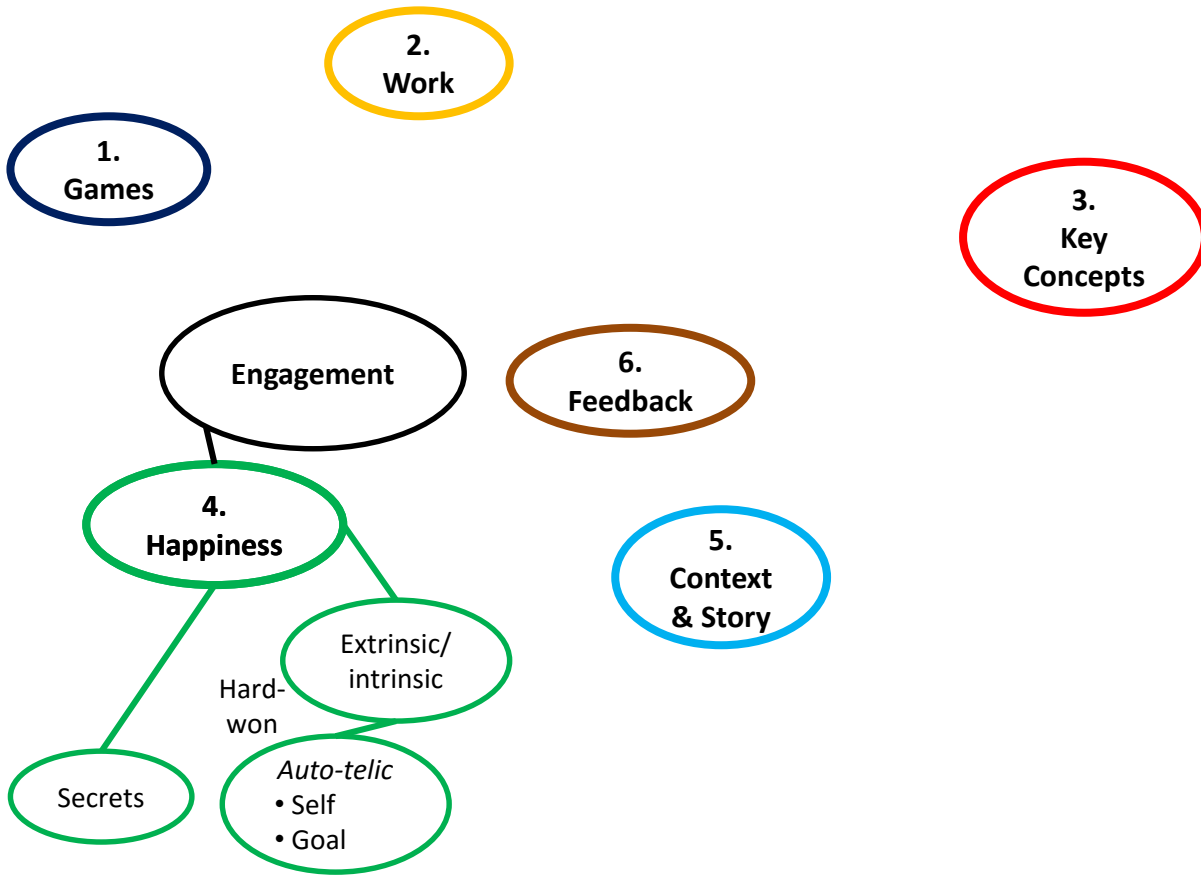


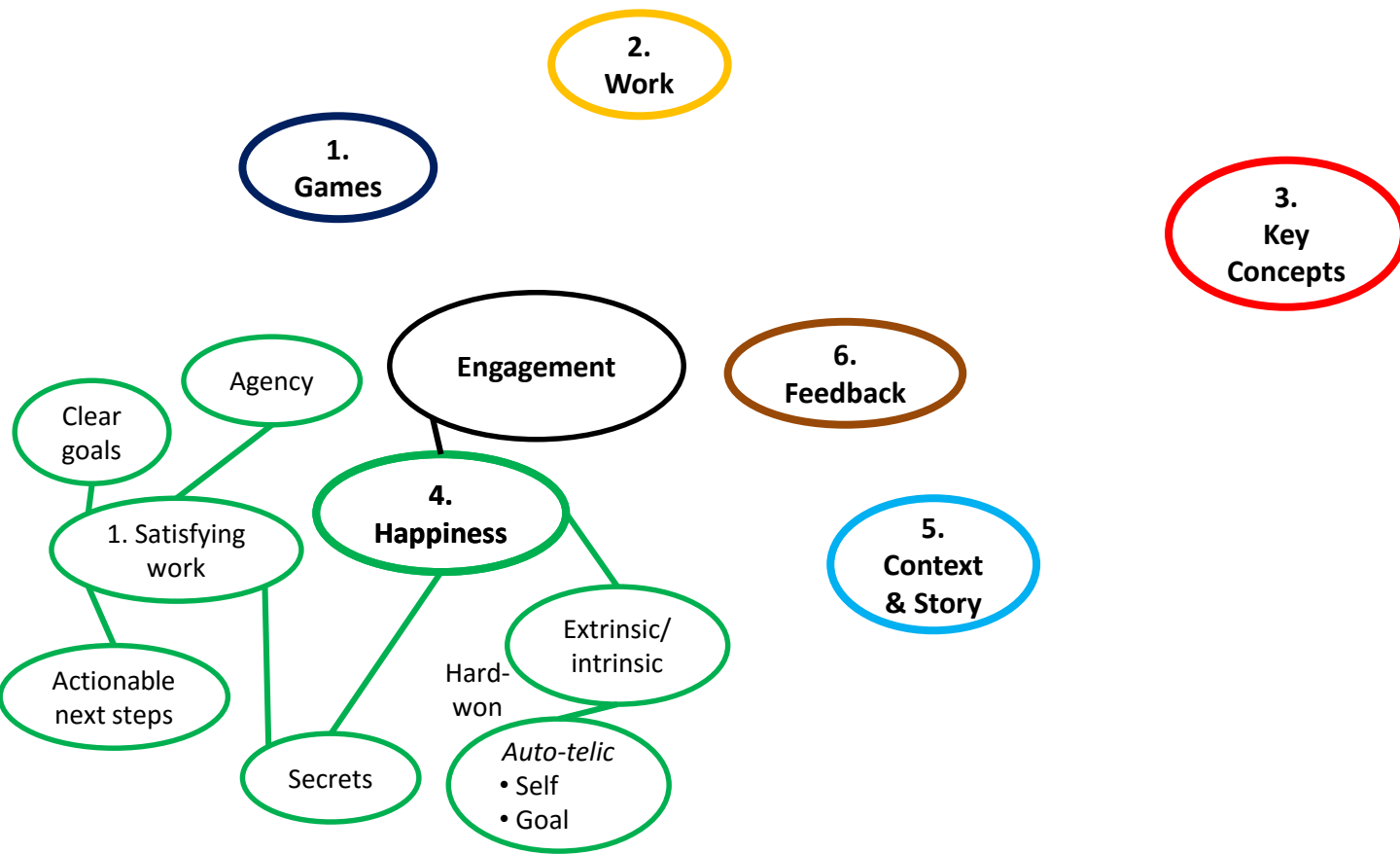
See Jane McGonical's 'Reality is Broken – why games make us better and how they can change the world'



The durability of happiness activities comes about when they are hard-won.

“When the source of positive emotion is yourself, it is *renewable*.” (Sonja Lyubomirsky)





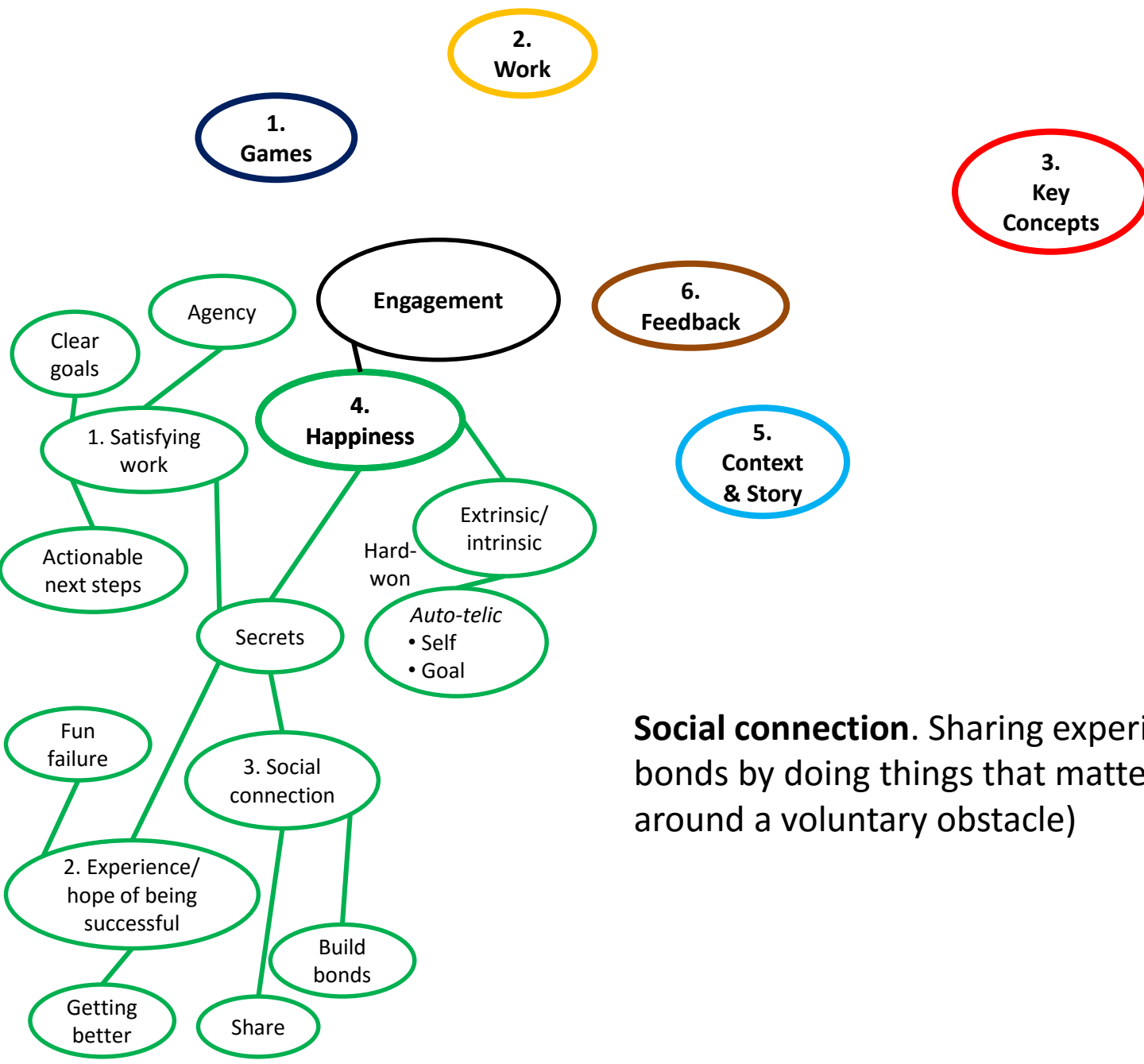
Satisfying work. Being immersed in clearly defined, demanding activities that allow us to see the direct impact of our efforts.

- A clear goal and actionable next steps towards achieving that goal (which is challenging but achievable)
- Agency

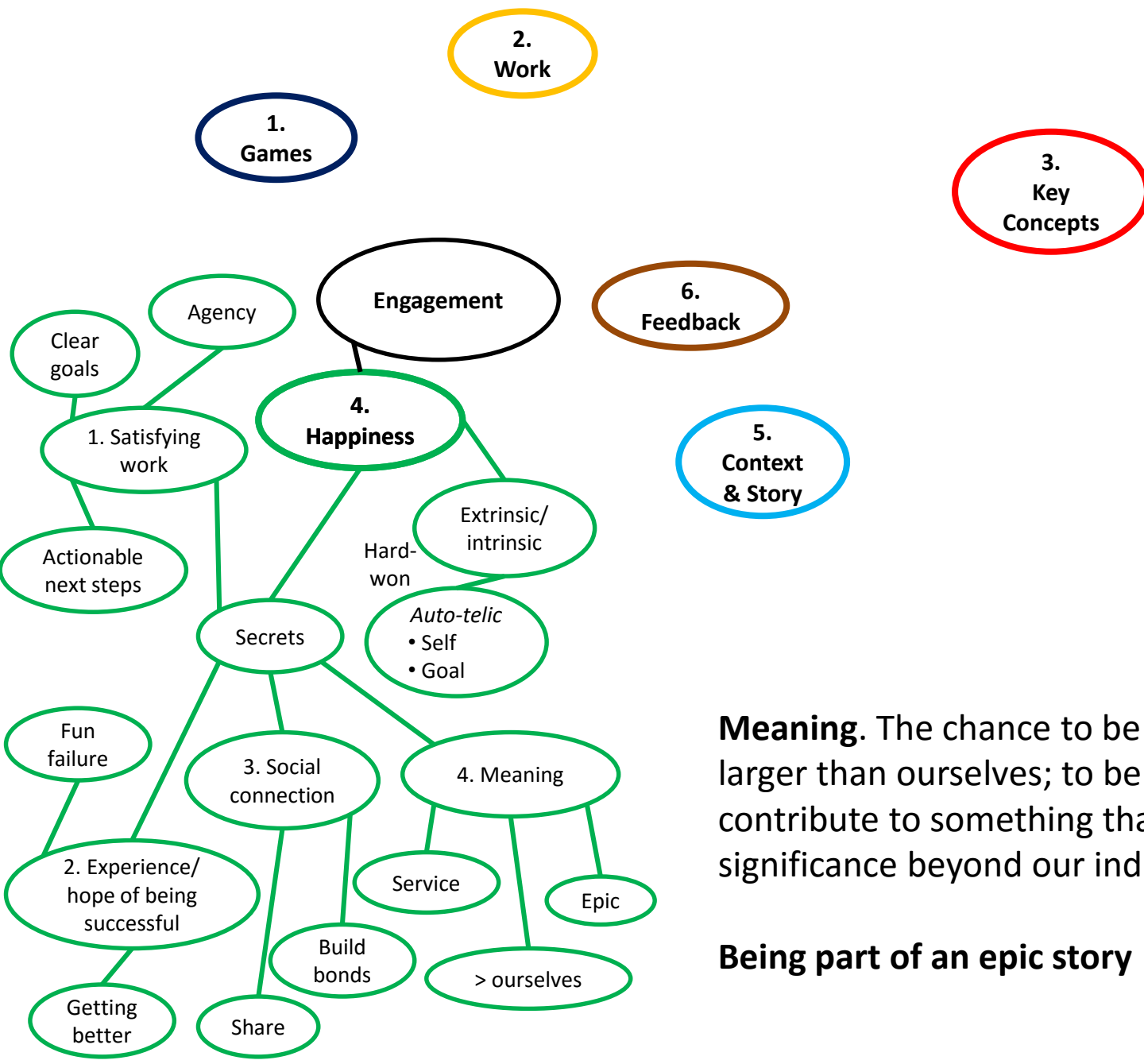


Experience, or at least hope, of being successful. Being optimistic about our chances of success, and feeling that we are getting better over time

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

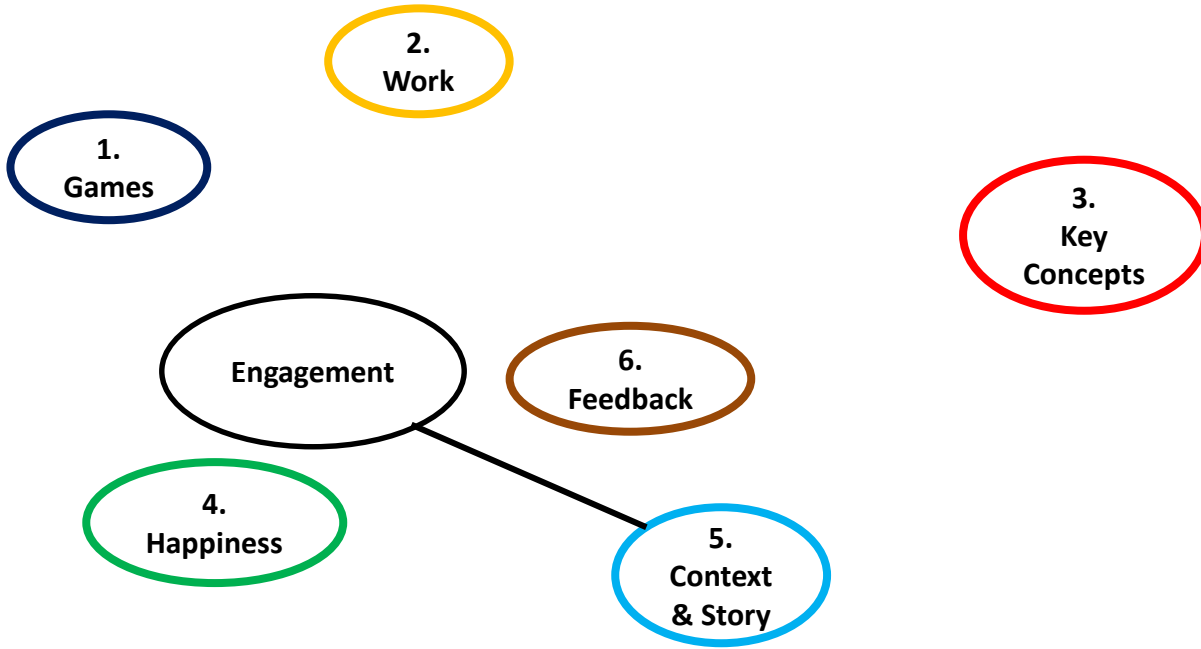


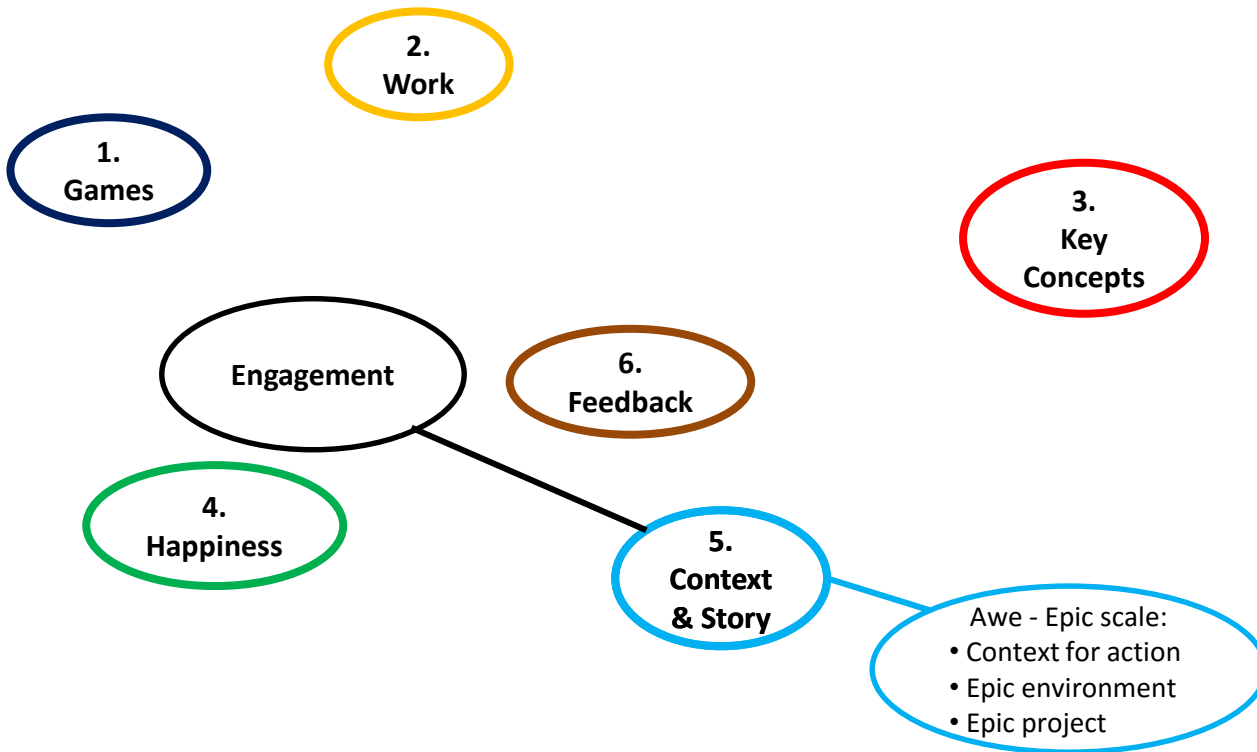
Social connection. Sharing experiences and building bonds by doing things that matter, together (organised around a voluntary obstacle)



Meaning. The chance to be a part of something larger than ourselves; to belong to and to contribute to something that has lasting significance beyond our individual lives.

Being part of an epic story



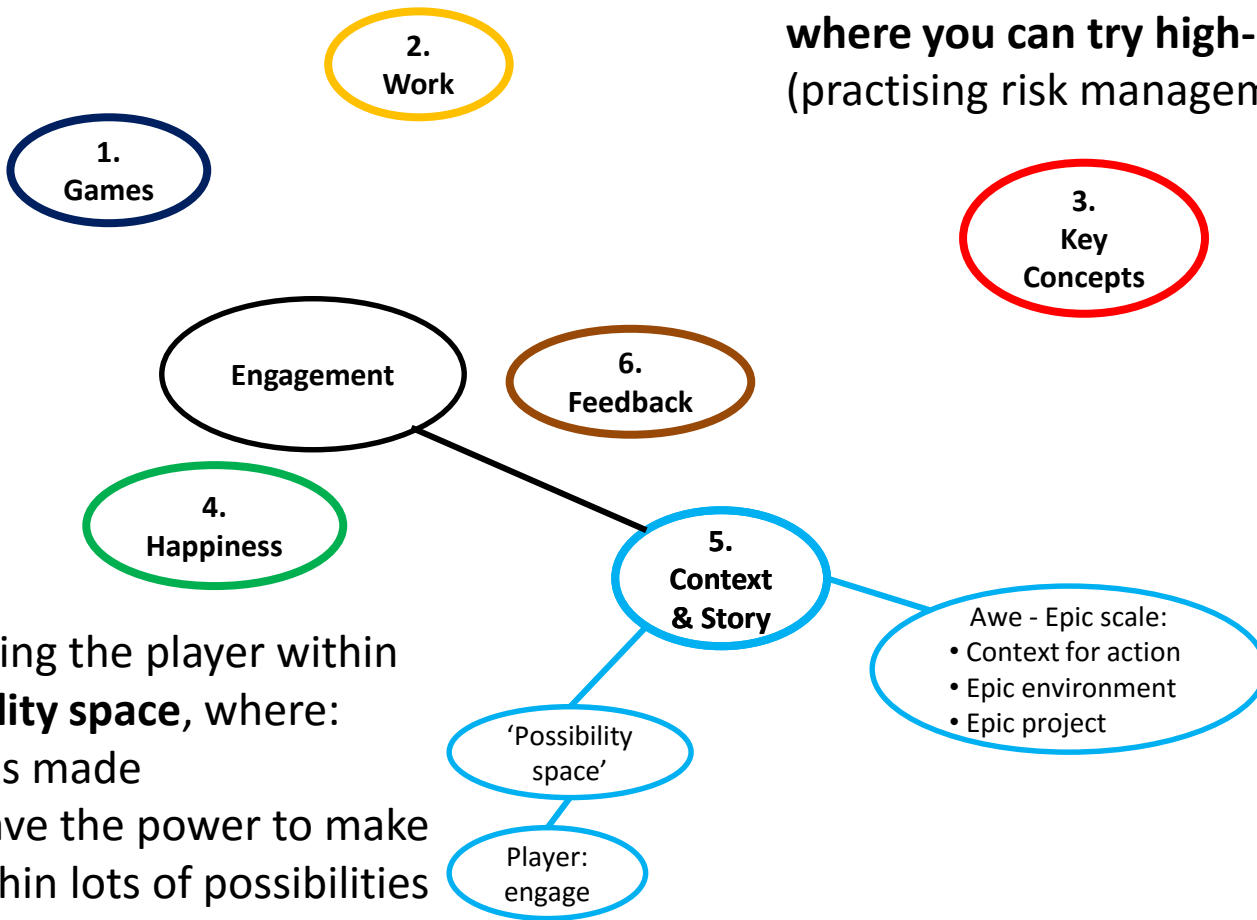


Awe (the biggest positive emotion), '**ambient wonder**', **delight** and aesthetic appreciation: 'sensawunda'

Epic scale bestows the power to "act with meaning: to do bigger picture. The story is the bigger picture; the player's (Jane McGonigal)



**Wargames are a low-risk place
where you can try high-risk things
(practising risk management)**

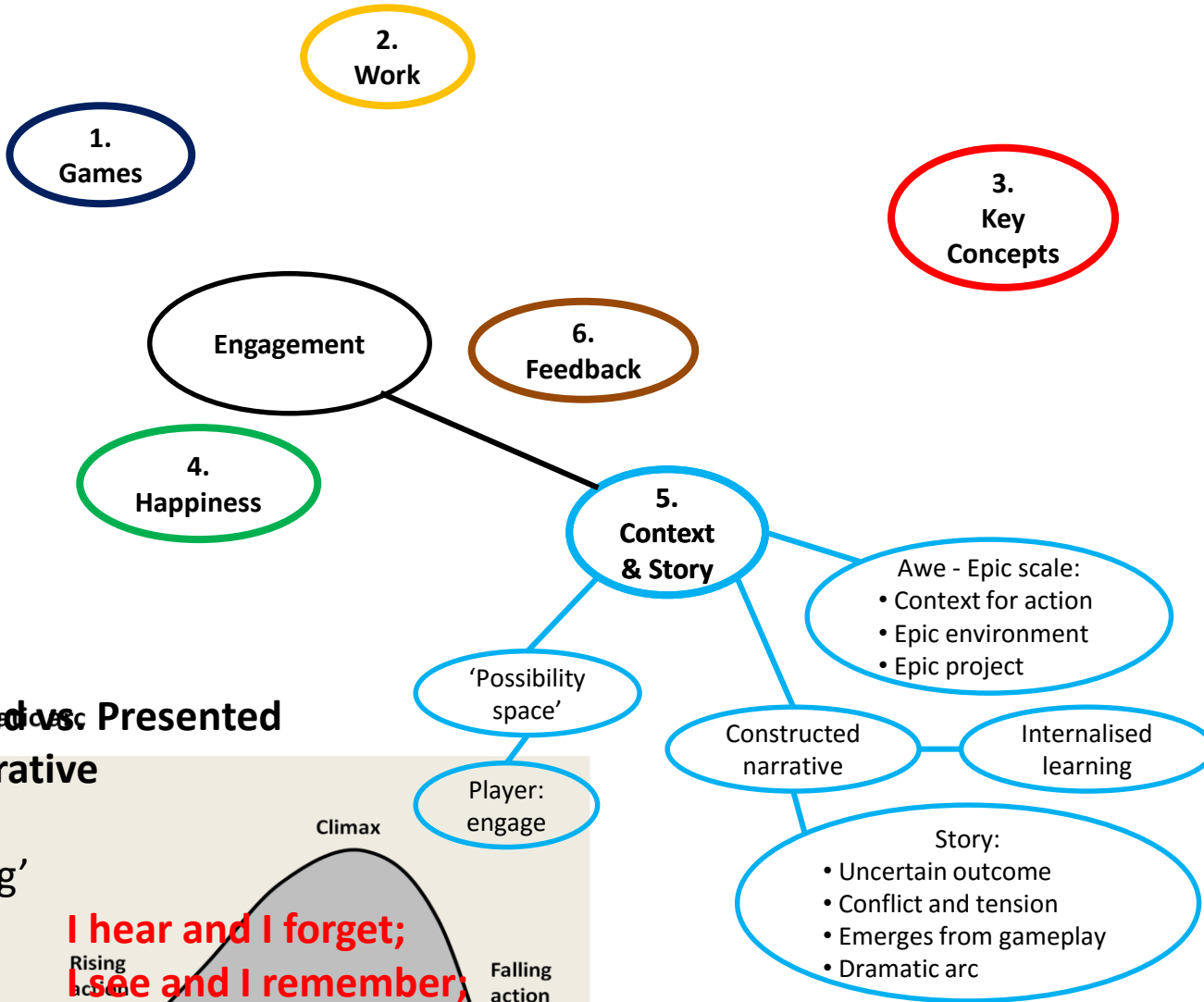


Fully engaging the player within the **possibility space**, where:

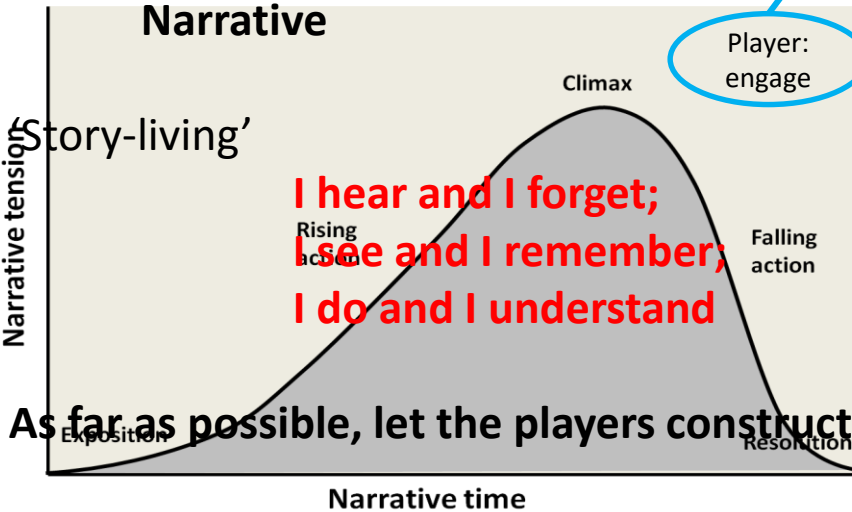
- Meaning is made
- Players have the power to make choices within lots of possibilities
- Players can be sent to places you can't go in real life
- Players and their experiences are put first
- Player author their own experiences
- Events are visceral and compelling; disruptive and strange

Encourage players to interrogate and reconcile their own world-view with the models presented in a game.

Wargames raise more questions than they answer



Constructed vs. Presented Narrative



As far as possible, let the players construct the narrative: the story itself is the fun of learning

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

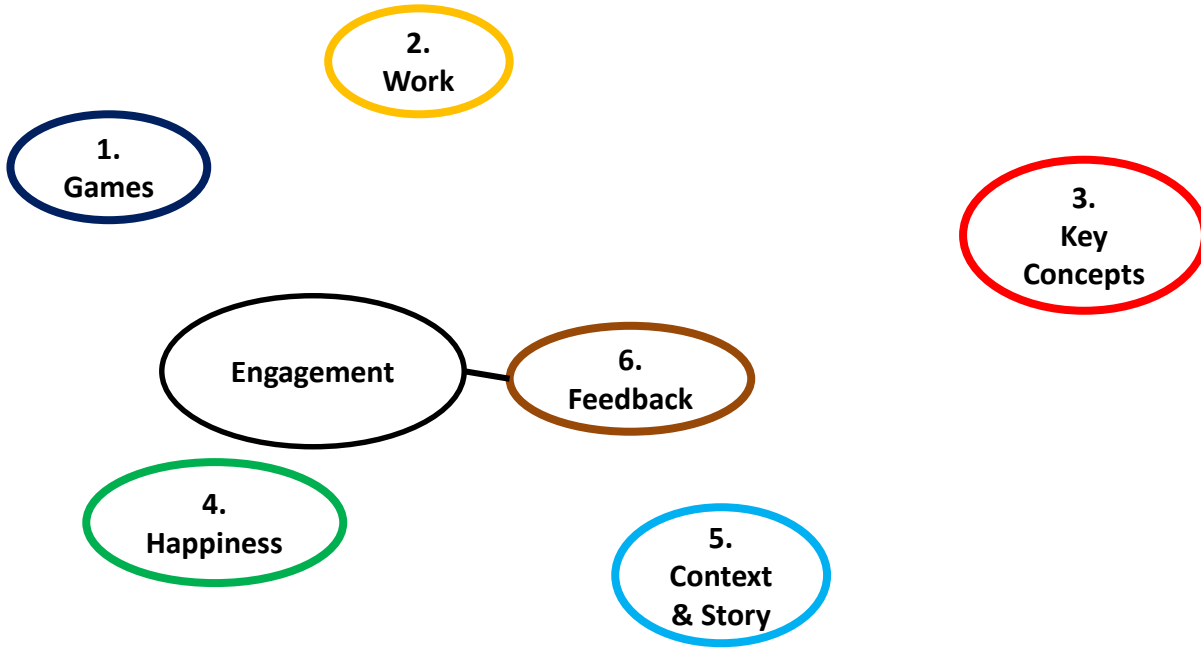


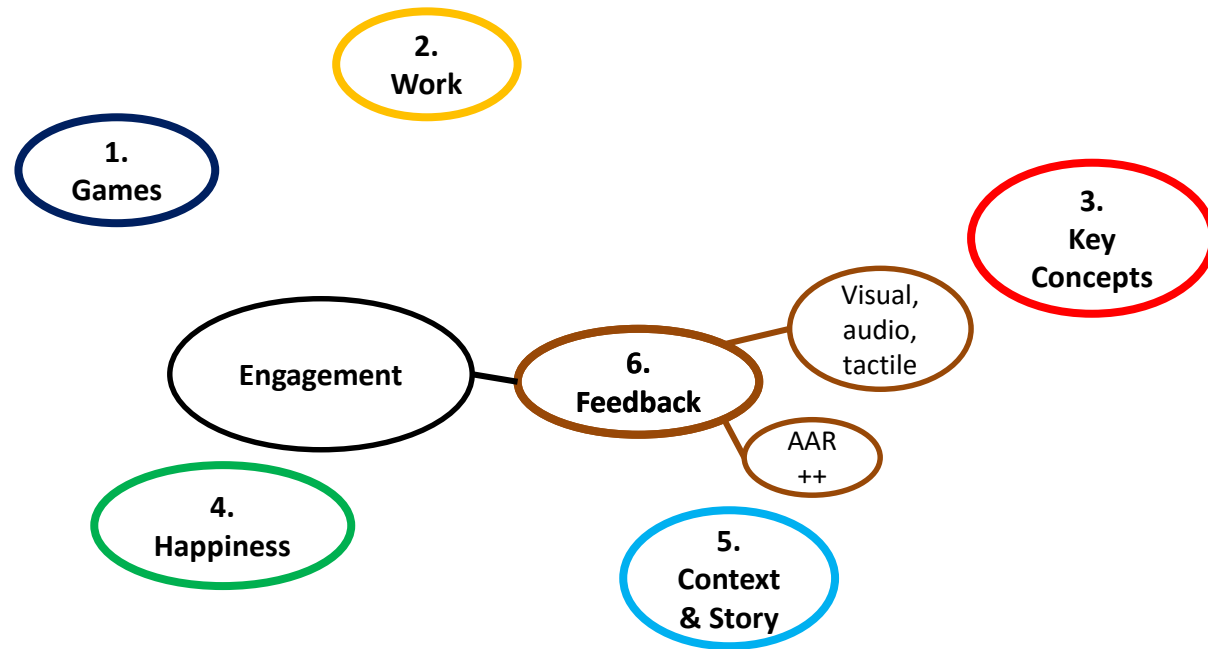
Magic circle (Johan Huizinga):

“A temporary world where the rules of the game apply, not those of the ordinary world”

Invitation to play:

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



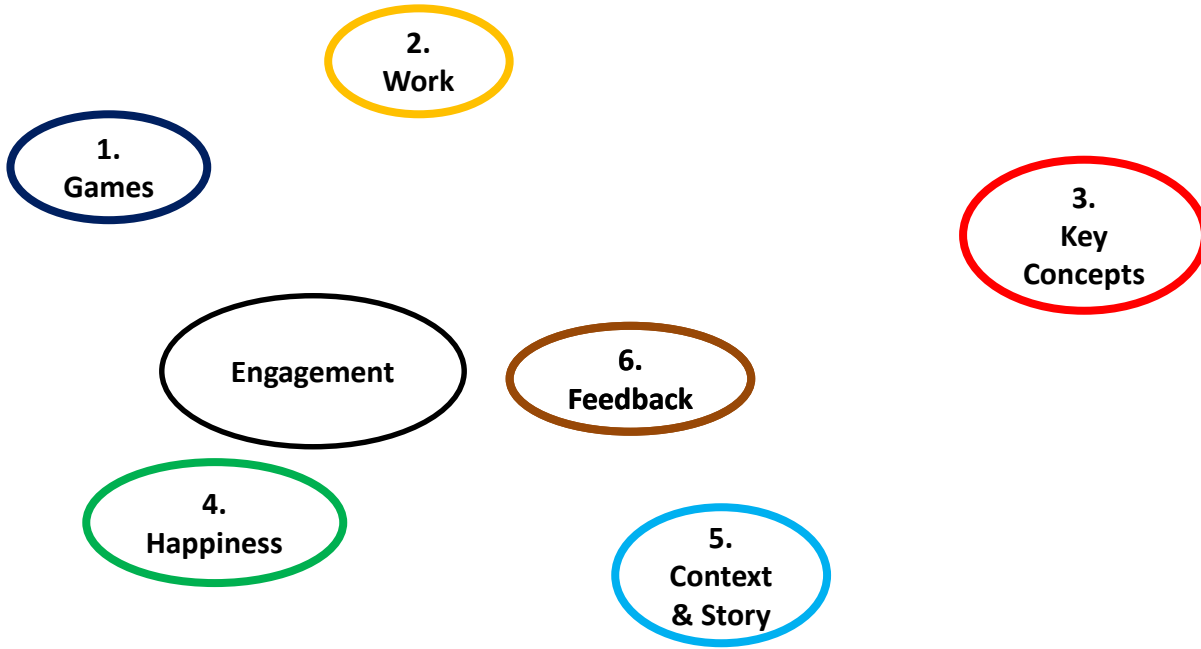


Feedback:

- Frequent, direct and vivid
- Multiple sources e.g. Gameplay, mentors etc
- Multi-sensory: e.g. role play

Rewards

- 'Balancing' and 'Reinforcing' (not positive and negative)
- Facing the consequences of their own decisions



In summary...



Questions?

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