

# SHARED

# LIFE



RESEARCH CREATION

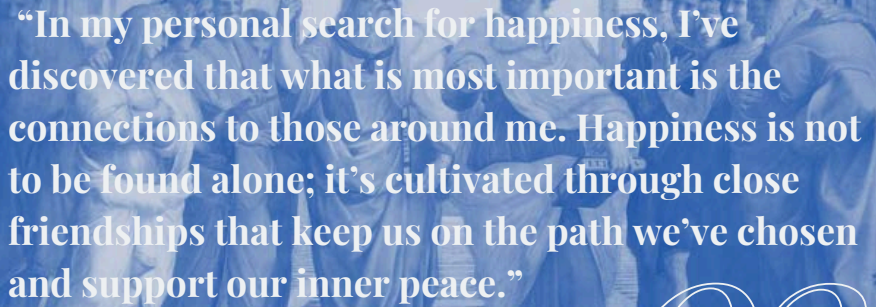
JAY MIDZELSKA

WHAT IS

HAPPINESS

TO YOU?

01



**“In my personal search for happiness, I’ve discovered that what is most important is the connections to those around me. Happiness is not to be found alone; it’s cultivated through close friendships that keep us on the path we’ve chosen and support our inner peace.”**

02

According to Aristotle, happiness is something that is conceived roughly as living well and doing well, which requires not merely ethical virtues but also activities through which these virtues will manifest. Friends play a crucial role in assisting us to integrate these virtues into our lives through shared experiences, thus making our happiness inherently relational and inseparable from those close to us. Together this forms a shared life, enlarging the self through meaningful attachments.

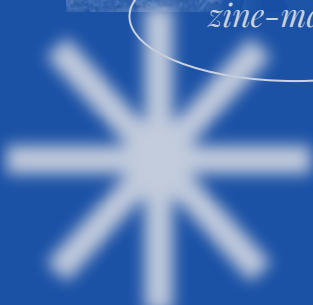
Happiness can be viewed as not just a state of being, but a way of life—one that we can keep ourselves accountable for, with the support of others who share our values, morals, and experiences.

In my case, these connections have been most often forged with other refugees, those who know what resilience and exile are and what paragraph 24 means. Together, our lives intertwine, forming one closely connected network that I aim to bring to the surface through portraits of my dear friends and short interviews we’ve made together. These conversations hold a therapeutic value—moments of listening, responding, and learning from one another’s stories, guiding my own journey toward happiness.

LISA



*zine-making*



03

## LISA: FAMILIARITY

“I love making things with my hands, including zines, which are a great tool to tell a story and are easily-distributable”

For me, happiness is about a sense of belonging and connection. It's found in the constancy of relationships, the comfort of routine, and the familiarity of shared experiences.

Since the beginning of the war, it has boiled down to the simplest monotonous things, like eating the same omelet with arugula every day with my boyfriend. I don't attach myself to places anymore, but I have been able to find comfort in one person, and it has brought me happiness since we met almost a year ago.

Life in Berlin still feels like an illusion, but I don't feel uncertainty anymore. I have much more control over my life, which came from repeating the same actions every day.



LIZA



*Cooking*

05

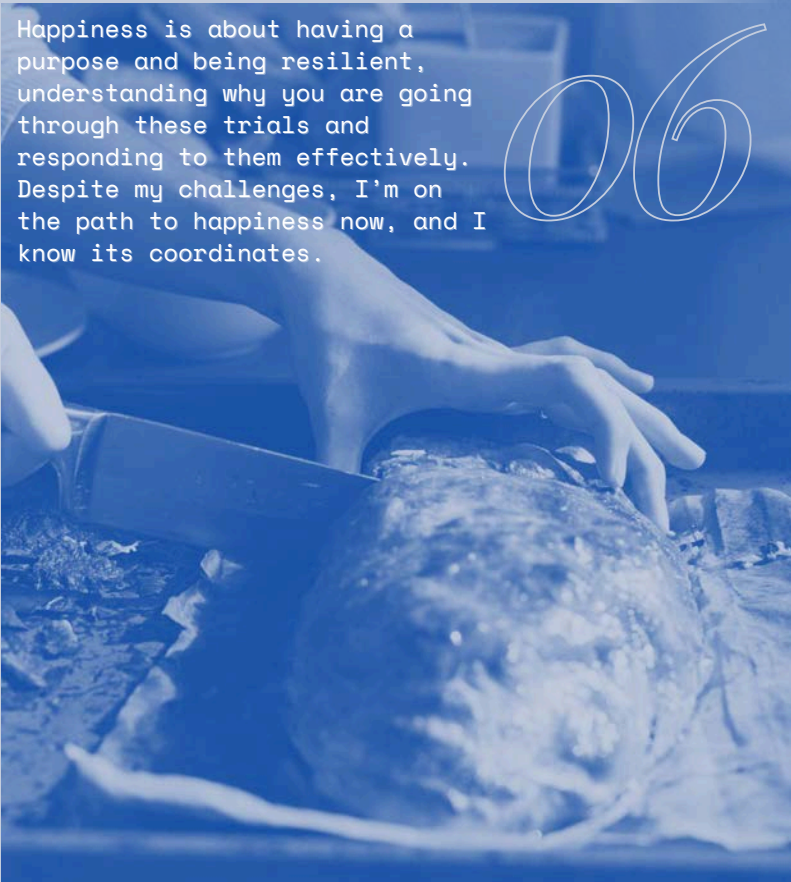
Happiness is a state that a person carries within themselves regardless of the circumstances around them.

“It’s not a burst of emotions, it’s not a dopamine rush. For me, it’s a quiet feeling that you want to share with very few people.”

But, of course, with special ones you want to share it and be in it together. You want to feel the good and the bad, allowing yourself to be soft.

Happiness is about having a purpose and being resilient, understanding why you are going through these trials and responding to them effectively. Despite my challenges, I’m on the path to happiness now, and I know its coordinates.

06



LIZA: BEING SOFT

ANYA



*bouldering*

07



## ANYA: WELL-BEING OF CLOSED ONES

I think happiness for me is about finding joy in fleeting moments and being in the moment in general.



Despite life's challenges, I can be happy through shared experiences, like bouldering, and genuine connections with my friends. Amidst societal pain that we feel, it's important to be able to distance yourself from your difficulties and look at them in the context of your whole life. I am still alive, so things are not as scary as they can be.

“War is definitely about growing up, and it has broadened my understanding of happiness. It now feels more collective, tied to the well-being of those around me.”

*My community is my support system. Having someone to text, to meet, to come back to has become something that supports me every day. My friends, especially from my hometown, help me bridge my past with my present.*



NASTYA



*table tennis*

09



NASTYA: APPRECIATING  
SMALL THINGS

“Yesterday is history,  
tomorrow is a mystery, but  
today is a gift. That is  
why it is called the  
present.” - Master Oogway  
from Kung Fu Panda

Happiness for me is being at the moment with no anxiety about the future. It consists of smaller moments that can form a bigger and fuller state of well-being.

With the beginning of war, you realize that what is most important is that everyone is alive and healthy, and there is not that much that you need to feel good. I need to remind myself this sometimes, that *capitalism and consumption is not the answer.*

10

As long as I can smell the flowers and feel the sun on my skin, there is still hope.

DARYNA



*table tennis*

11

## DARYNA: COMMUNITY

Happiness is complicated and it's constant work. I think I assured myself that I would not be fully happy until I found myself, and that still has not happened.

However, just wanting to get out of bed, wanting to do things that bring me happiness, even if it is more momentary. Ping-pong helped me feel this joy again. It provided constancy because it simply couldn't disappear from my life.

“Within the table tennis community,  
I started to feel safe again.”

Hangar to me was a place with no prejudice, no homophobia or racism. I could go there and be in the moment, sharing it with new people who had the same hobby. Same thing I feel here with our friend group (Jay, Daryna, Nastya, Anya).

I finally feel like I belong and I don't miss home that much, especially since I have the space here to speak Ukrainian.



# SHARED LIFE



## *What is happiness?*

