

Walking towards the truth mandala, I remember the Joyality team's advice to take a question in with us. *What question do I have?*

As sudden as a text message, the word 'Elephant' appears in my mind. I think back to earlier in the day when the amazing founder of the Good Karma Network announced she had lost the wooden charm off her necklace. I am now fixated on this question, *Where is her elephant?*



Late in 2018, I stumbled across an organisation called the Economics of Happiness. Watching their videos, I was ecstatic. *This is it!* Having spent three years studying a degree in public health nutrition and realising that poor health is a by-product of economic structures and disregard for holistic lenses, Helena Norberg-Hodge represented the leadership I was missing. I had a strong feeling that I needed to meet her, so I was even more stoked that she was presenting at Newkind. I feel I have no other purpose than to increase the GDH of which ever space I find myself in, focusing on the following:

Food

In her presentations, Helena stressed that the localisation of food is essential to almost every aspect of life quality. She described how insane multinational trade deals, supported by government subsidies, allow for fossil fuel wasting, high mileage food systems. Countries often import and export the same amount of identical product just because it's cheaper to exploit someone in a country that you can't see. She explained that wealthy countries may advocate for developing countries to have higher emissions allowances in order to 'catch up' development wise. However, this will allow them to continue to be exploited.

Having spent the past 8 months making connections in the ethical food scene in Brisbane, after Newkind I decided to set up a branch of the Slow Food Youth Network here. This will allow for Brisbane youths to connect with their food and each other, as well as an International network of amazing young food sovereignty activists. I'll be co-hosting an event in April with FoodConnect (a large community owned food co-op) called World Disco Soup Day. This is an internationally celebrated night for dancing and sharing dinner made from discarded food. I'm working towards involving local food producers, Indigenous activists and international community members.

As events co-ordinator of the UQ Community Garden Club, I have organised a screening for the Economics of Happiness in April.

The Mini Farm project is an urban farming charity in Brisbane of which I am the Community Liaison. We land share urban spaces around Brisbane city and grow organic produce which we donated to people facing crisis. Every Saturday we get volunteers together and teach them various urban farming techniques. Our mission is to provide a high nutrient dense alternative to the processed food typically offered by food relief organisations.

Environment

Currently, I am studying a Master of Environmental Health Sciences at UQ because my aim in life is to assist in the shift towards localised, cultural, holistic food systems.

Andy Bakonyi explained in his Ethical Finance discussion how the big Australian banks invest in fossil fuels. Considering, I have switched to ME bank and converted my superfund to Verve Super – a company created to empower women through personal finance literacy and ethical investments.

Kate Nelson in her 'Plastic Free-Living' workshop explained that plastic waste is like a dripping tap. To solve this, we shouldn't just put a bucket under it, we need to turn off the tap. She also reminded us of the health implications of plastic chemical leeching. From her advice, the guide distributed by Saba, I'm reducing plastic waste in my own life.

Kindness and love

During Lina's workshop 'Being Kind to the Quiet Ones', I learnt that introverts need time to develop their thoughts. Extraverts however develop their thoughts by 'popcorning' - saying the first thing that comes to mind out loud. To allow for everyone's contributions, never brainstorm as a group, send out the agenda beforehand and have people write questions down. This lesson in facilitation has expanded my perceptions group sessions as to who is speaking often and why. I now realise we can set up a space to champion diversity in communication, such as due to language barriers or disabilities.

In the 'Culture Aware' workshop, I learned to only share cultural knowledge for the purpose of reciprocity. To remain culturally sensitive, have discussion with community. I got on well with Gerard during the festival and we have kept in contact since. We are planning to collaborate on Culture Aware projects in Brisbane.

Hoda and Behrouz' amazing presentation reinforced for me the importance of supporting refugees. I've begun volunteer English tutoring for Mu'ooz – an Eritrean restaurant which supports women who are refugees from Africa to find employment.

Music

In the 'Art in Social Movements' workshop, Dr Daliri passionately said that everyone is innately an artist. Matt and Anisa also explained that art can convey a message with greater emotion and depth. Inspired by the Newkind campfire, once home I played guitar and sang in front of people for the first time. I now take every opportunity to jam with friends and will be volunteering to play music at an aged care home.



As we paced through the ancient curves of the truth mandala, an ocean of calm swirled around us. My gaze often rested on the colourful symbol tattoo of the person in front of me. About half way through, we each clasped the hand of the person in front and behind us. I watched as the joining of hands snaked through the group. Upon exiting, the currents of excitement and emotion reminded me that life is huge. The symbol tattoo caught my eye again and I was shocked to realise that I had been walking directly behind the owner of the lost charm the whole time. I asked if she had found it - she hadn't.

Was I able to find the elephant charm? Unfortunately, not. But the way everyone joined hands in the truth mandala reminded me of baby elephants wrapping their trunk around the tail of their mama, and I thought that was pretty charming.