



# Harnessing the Scandinavian concepts of 'Lagom' and 'Hygge' in creative bliss

*Alice Hortop*  
*Senior Occupational Therapy Lecturer*  
*The University of the West of England*



# THANK YOU!

Karen Henderson and Samantha Jefferies



# Welcome and thank you!

The Danish established the notion of schools of enlightenment in the early 1800's, also known as folk high schools. Mutual respect between learners and educators were the cornerstone of this new form of free education without exams. It was a place of equality in a geographical location where no social hierarchy was recognised. Teachers enabled people to become active and valued members of their local community through their attendance.

The teaching design encouraged participants amusement, rather than merely obtain educational knowledge. The school purpose were to build strong community relations and create collaborative learning.

The enlightenment ideas spread through all Nordic countries.

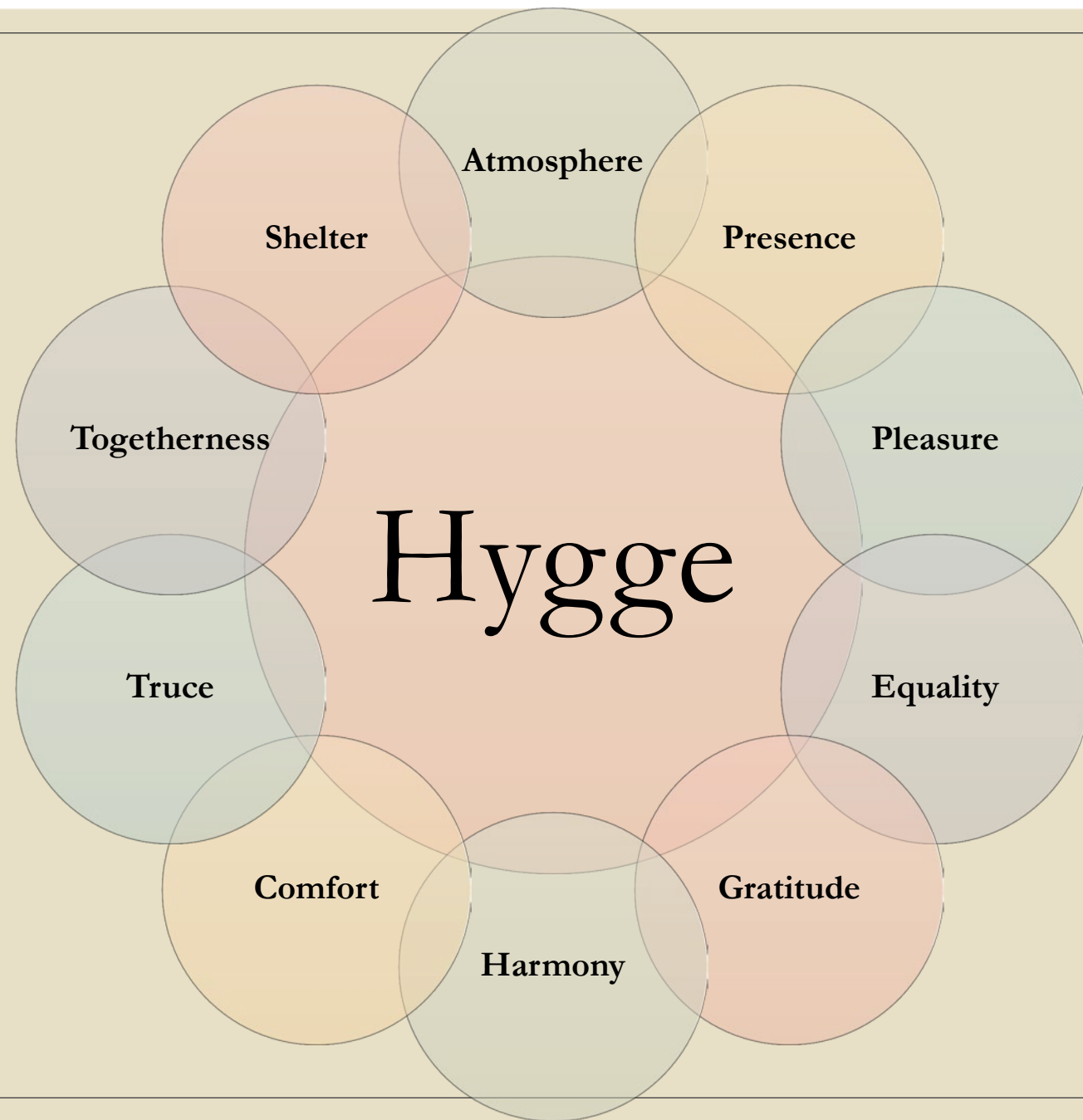


- Soderberg (2016) “the nuances of hygge are individually constructed to the person” which leads to a series of delicious definitions that invoke beautiful imagery, sensations, emotions and smells...
- Pierce (2001) defined occupation as a “person’s personally constructed, one time experience within a unique context.”
- The closest, yet woefully inadequate translation in English is ‘cosy’
- In old Norse, hygge is identified as “thinking and feeling satisfied, relating to shelter, rest, safety and regaining energy and courage.” (p13)



# Hygge [Hue-gah]

An atmosphere of warmth, well being and cosiness,  
when you feel at peace and able to enjoy simple  
pleasures and being in the moment.



(Wiking, 2016)

# The language of hygge...



- Hyggeligste or hyggliere... the most hygge, more hygge
- Hyggelig or hygging... The doing of hygge, hyggelig activity
- Hygge om... creating hygge for another
- Hygge krog... creating a cosy nook

The words we use build our narratives, our stories  
and those words are impactful



- Seligman (1998) Psychology has lost its way with its focus on pathology (Seligman, 1998). He called for a change in focus from the preoccupation only with repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities.
- Ratio of 100 sadness studies to every happiness study. (2003). The study of “living a good life” (Peterson, 2012)
- “Positive Psychology is the scientific study of the strengths that enable individuals and communities to thrive. The field is founded on the belief that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experiences of love, work, and play.” (University of Pennsylvania, 2015)
- The search is for 'authentic happiness' through identifying and cultivating strengths in productivity, play, love and parenting (Seligman, 2003). AUTHENTIC.. What does this mean?
- Importantly the focus is understanding how positive emotions can be harnessed in challenging times... e.g. post traumatic growth

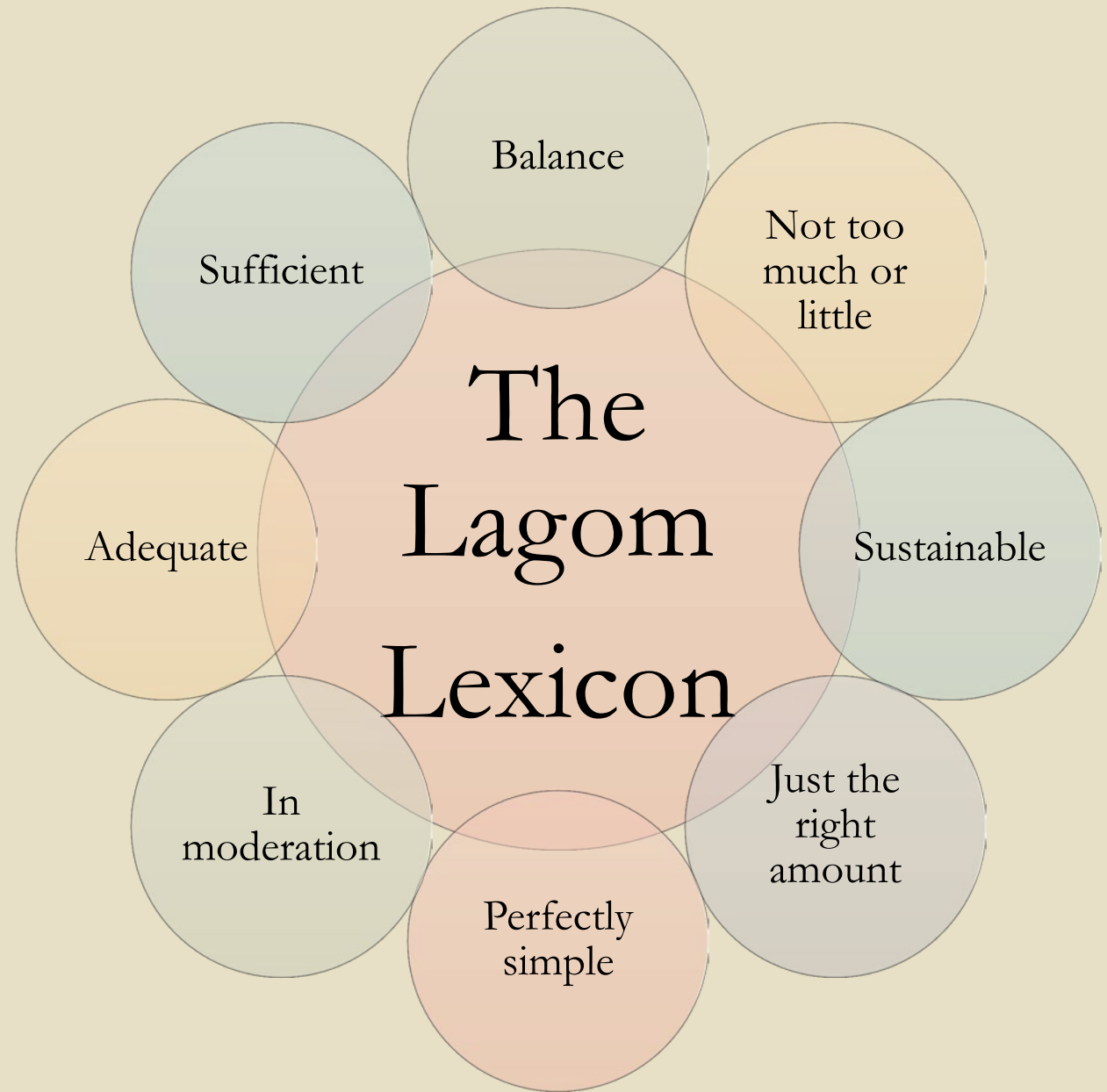


# Lagom [Lá:gom]

Find spaces, moments and ways of living that are not too much and not too little. Find a state of being that is just right. Lagom is the key to becoming more centred, happy and balancing the pressures of everyday life

# Lagom

- ‘Lagom encourages us to create a happy life by choosing to live a balanced and fruitful existence.’
- ‘Upcycling, recycling and using sustainable materials where possible is the way to enjoy the home comforts you love, without taking too much from the planet.’





## kintsukuroi

(n.) (v. phr.) "to repair with gold"; the art of repairing pottery with gold or silver lacquer and understanding that the piece is more beautiful for having been broken



# So with these guiding concepts:

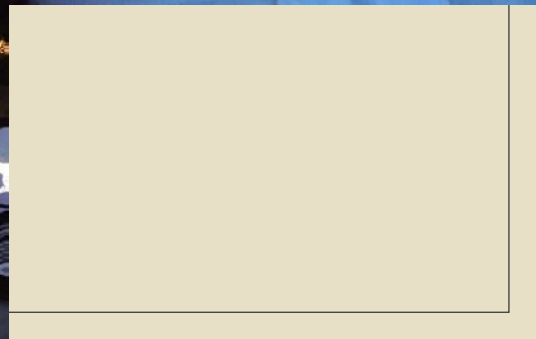
- All the materials are reuse and are being upcycled from my local bridal shop.
- The sustenance is partially foraged and in reused receptacles, I hope you enjoy.
- There is no pressure to produce, there is no exam!
- I will not be dictating a project to you but rather showing some inspiration for your ideas and giving you space to percolate them.
- I hope I have created a cosy atmosphere, a more permanent venue of course could be cosier.
- There is no pressure to entertain each other, you can: collaborate, work in parallel, work alone or just be (eat, drink, watch, feel the fabrics etc).













# References

- Akerstrom, L. (2017) *Lagom: The Swedish secret of living well*. London: Hutchinson.
- Pierce, D. (2001) Untangling occupation and activity. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, Vol. 55, pp 138-146
- Peterson, C. (2012) *Pursuing the good life: 100 reflection on positive psychology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Seligman, M.E.P. (2004) *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realise Your Potential For Lasting Fulfillment*. reprinted ed. London: Brealey.
- Soderberg, M. (2016) *Hygge: The Danish Art of Happiness*. London: Penguin.
- Wiking, M. (2017) *The Little Book of Lykke: The Danish Search For the World's Happiest People*. London: Penguin.
- Wiking, M (2016) *The Little Book of Hygge: The Danish Way to Live Well*. London: Penguin.