

Making a Chef's Heart Sing, A Positive Health Framework for Culinary Arts Education

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ABSTRACT: Though singing is not a practice associated with culinary arts, the utilisation of the analogy illustrates the motivation and application of authentic positive health in practice that benefits well-being and flourishing. While the focus in most universities is to develop the positive qualities of students for a modern workplace, many of the practices are “at odds with contemporary models of education and evidence emerging from the scientific study of well-being” (Oades et al. 2011, 433). Of significance is that “more well-being is synergistic with better learning” (Seligman et al. 2009, 294). Mindful learning as a lens of awareness, leads to “greater sensitivity to context and perspective and greater control over our lives” (Langer 2000, 220). This mirrors White’s (2016) definition of positive education and its impact on student well-being. To promote human flourishing, and well-being, Joseph (2015) echoes the need to integrate positive psychology into professional practice in the classroom. Educators therefore have a responsibility to support the activities that make a student’s heart sing thus enabling students develop and unlock their full potential. As leaders of programme design, the authenticity of the educator’s approach influences authentic learning. Positive psychology is a contemporary framework for adopting such an approach. This paper explores the potential of integrating, mindful learning pedagogy, the science of positive health and positive psychology coaching, in culinary education, now and for the professional kitchens of the future. A co-created intervention with culinary students was investigated. The design of a new framework for culinary arts education is proposed.

Positive Health and Culinary Education, A Call to Action

Culinary education as we know it today has evolved from a workplace master apprentice model in the Middle Ages, vocational training in the 18th Century to a formal structured professional development approach enabling training in each section of the professional environment as part of Auguste Escoffier’s *partie system* (Mills 2007). Mills questioned the future relevance of this 20th century pedagogical model for the classical curriculum and called for innovative teaching approaches. Chappell et al. (2000) warned that an over emphasis on competency-based training can lead to a “lack of general, social, intellectual and emotional abilities” (192), accentuating the role of culinary education rather than training, as a more holistic approach in developing the student and skilled future-focused graduates.

From an authentic Positive Health (PH) perspective, Christian van Nieuwerburgh (2021), advocates for supporting people to engage in activities that make their heart sing. This in many ways sums up the motivation and application of (PH) in practice and, in turn, explains the meaning and validity of this analogy for well-being (Ranson 2015), (Camlin et al. 2020). Nieuwerburgh’s call to action, the applied potential of PH and flourishing in culinary arts education (CAE) now and for the professional kitchens of the future, is an unexplored area.

Rationale for Embedding Positive Health in Educational Practice

While the psychology of education frames educational practices and methodology, in order to promote human flourishing, and well-being in the classroom, there is a fundamental need, to integrate Positive Psychology (PP) into professional practice (Joseph 2015).

Happiness and pleasure define hedonic wellbeing, while the eudemonic facet of wellbeing places emphasis on “doing what is worth doing” (Ryan and Deci 2001, 145). Seligman through defining PH and designing the PERMA conceptual framework (positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning and accomplishment), speaks of “authentic happiness”, where there is “flourishing”, meaning and “flow” (Seligman 2002, ; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000). Viewing life thorough a “growth mind-set” lens (Dweck 2017), aware of personal character strengths, supports the experience of positive emotions, facilitates the “building and broadening” of biological and emotional resources as well as social connections for wellbeing (Fredrickson 2001, 24). For educators, embracing this potential in programme design and delivery is key in the changing landscape within the classroom. Oates et al. (2021, 696) argue that their “integration approach” should focus on building these well-being capabilities, as this is compatible with teaching the being and doing, (mirroring Dweck’s growth mindset theory), while also giving students a repertoire of options, selecting and adapting for their needs depending on the context (Alexandrova 2017).

Experiencing positive emotions using the PERMA Model is what makes this happen (Ouweneel et al. 2011) and gives rise to personal resources, referred to by Luthans et al. (2015) as Psychological Capital (PsyCap). Academic PsyCap includes the development of resilience, optimism, hope and efficacy in students, and is positively correlated with academic performance (Luthans et al. 2012), and

engagement (Carmona-Halty et al. 2019). Developing these psychological strengths in college students also fosters a flourishing state of mental health and well-being (Selvaraj and Bhat 2018, 285).

Of significance in education is that autonomous motivation based on the self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000) is linked to greater psychological health and effective performance (Migliorini et al. 2019), pursuit of which mirrors true self values, concerns and satisfies basic physiological needs (Migliorini et al. 2019). This self-realisation is the ultimate goal of educational learning outcomes. As this realisation is co-dependent on awareness, the educator should empower students to explore and experience this sense of well-being and in turn motivate a determination to sustain it. Pedagogy that uses mindfulness, meditation and coaching may therefore be useful in progressing this aspiration.

While clear goals contribute to academic success and well-being, Schippers (2019) argues that this approach is lacking in education. Coaching and teaching are viewed as very separate approaches. “Coaching is unlocking people’s potential to maximize their own performance. It is helping people to learn rather than teaching them” (Whitmore 1992, 10). Corti however proposed that mindfulness and coaching improved ‘effective self-regulated learning in students’ (2020, 17). For Langer, ‘mindful learning’ is a lens of awareness that creates ‘a rich discriminatory detail’ (2000, 222), which leads to ‘greater sensitivity to context and perspective and ultimately to greater control over our lives’ (2000, 220), including health. The application of PP in coaching approaches is referred to as Positive Psychology Coaching (PPC), (Oades and Passmore 2014). Embedded in this model are the PP theories mentioned earlier, which can facilitate the learning process (Petersen 2015). According to Burke (2018, 6), from a quality and skills context, there is a need to follow a conceptual framework for PPC practice, even within educational settings.

Exploring an Authentic Application of Positive Health to Culinary Education Practice

When well-being comes from engaging our strengths and virtues, our lives are imbued with authenticity.

Martin Seligman (2002)

Educators have a responsibility to support people to do more of the activities that make their heart sing, enabling students to develop and unlock their full potential. The authenticity of the approach as authentic leaders of programme design and in the classroom, influences authentic learning. Positive psychology is a contemporary framework for adopting such an approach. Authentic leaders are defined as being “deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others values, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient and of high moral character” (Avolio et al. 2004, 4). The Avolio et al. model (Figure 1) illustrates how positive emotions and trust are instrumental in allowing an authentic leader exert influence on the belief’s, attitudes, behaviours and thus empowering the “followers” for engagement, meaning and performance.

Peunte et.al. (2007) explored the role of a “trigger event” in this process, where this wake-up call proactively results in the authentic leader taking the first step in self-directed learning. Approaching and developing this leadership in CAE involves appreciative inquiry, a reflective process which aims to identify through awareness, the positive core of strengths and inner voice of the educator. As a validated approach to action research, this has value also for curriculum implementation (Puente et al. 2007, 3). One of the process models for appreciative inquiry is *The 4-D Cycle* (Cooperrider et al. 2003, 5). In application, this is influenced by the topic which could arise from the trigger event, which subsequently is explored from a positive perspective through

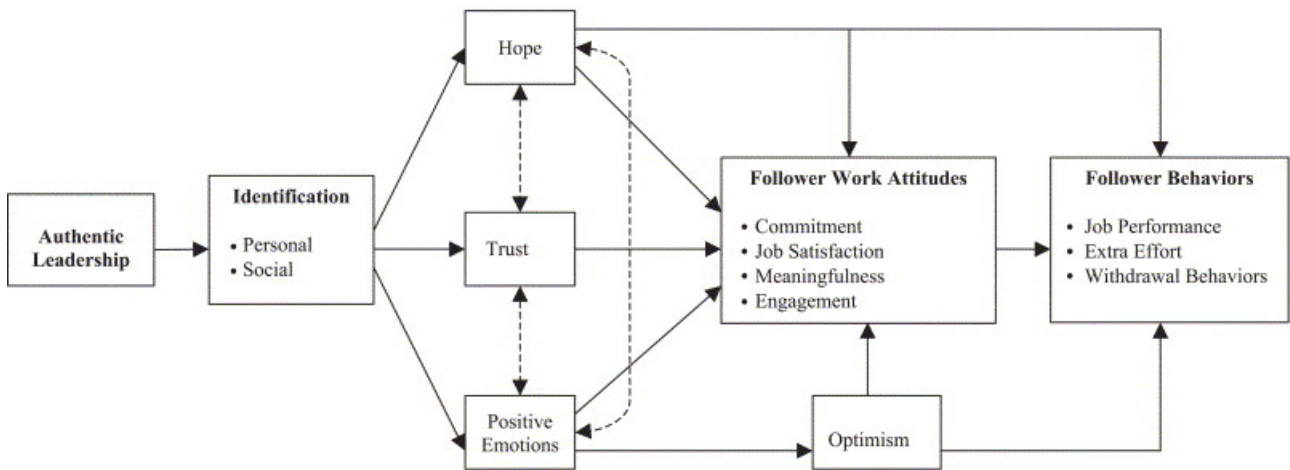


Figure 1. Proposed Framework Linking Authentic Leadership to Follower’s Attitudes and Behaviours (Avolio et al. 2004, 803). Reprinted by permission from Elsevier.

conversation (*Discovery*), from which an understanding/perspective, images, solutions emerge (*Dream*), leading to deciding on what will work best and be authentic (*Design*), and culminating in change that is sustainable (*Destiny*).

Culinary Arts Education: The Mindful Kitchen Project Trial

Mirroring this model of authentic leadership and mindful learning, the author, a culinary educator, sought to explore how educators could move towards using the PP framework for CAE. Through appreciative inquiry and self-directed learning on PH and the aforementioned theories, the self-awareness that resulted, "triggered" a collaborative investigation between the author, a culinary educator colleague and their students. Positive health was the topic choice for the 4-D Cycle, which from a positive core, made its way through the cycle with very positive outcomes mirroring the attitudes of Avolio et al.'s model (2004, 803).

This exploration, as a collaborative, theory-driven intervention, set in a real-world educational setting, focused on practice, is defined by Burke and Dempsey (2021) as educational design-based research, in that it seeks to make a connection between theory and practice. The motivation of such an approach is to produce "new theories, artefacts, and practices that account for and potentially impact learning and teaching in a naturalistic setting" (Barab and Squire 2004, 2).

With students as voluntary design partners, a new module *The Mindful Kitchen: Creativity and Social Gastronomy*, that embedded PH into mindful creativity and active citizenship through food, was created and piloted within one semester, captivated by the tag line *Interconnections-Nourishing Lives-Making a Difference*. The student cohort (n=12) involved in this study, were in year 2 of their culinary arts programme. They all had expressed the wish after completing *The Mindful Kitchen: Health and Well-being for Chefs* module in year 1, to continue "The Mindful Kitchen" approach in year 2 of their studies.

Though some students are acutely aware of their creative ability, student feedback from the preceding module *The Mindful Kitchen: Health and well-being for chefs* (Murray and Sweeney 2019), conveyed that the mindful approach increased this awareness. Though creativity is part of culinary arts, it is also a skill which can be taught to produce innovative professional culinarians. Alongside this, social gastronomy has been very much part of the global response by chefs during COVID-19. Social Gastronomy is now regarded as the new hospitality (Mc Mahon 2021; Sweeney 2020b), one which students need to embrace as a future career option. The vision of social gastronomy is that of active learning: "the relationship between the kitchen and people, a way of serving others that respects the environment and reflects the culture as well as an opportunity to live in a future that is zero hunger and zero waste" (Gryczka 2018), thus also reflecting the UN sustainability goal no. 2, zero hunger. Within culinary education, despite food being a tool for

change, there is very limited focus on programme-embedded community-engaged learning and ways for students to explore how they can use their skills and knowledge in active citizenship.

The resulting co-created kitchen-based, mindful-focused module, *The Mindful Kitchen- Creativity and Social Gastronomy* (Sweeney and Folan 2021), had PP at its core, while also mirroring Seligman's output in that it was "imbued with authenticity". Pedagogically, mindful-learning, contemplative pedagogy and engaged learning were used.

Learning outcomes focused on the students' application of a mindful learning approach, underpinned by positive psychology, for example- for their own life, understanding their character strengths, the role of positive emotions, and the potential of kindness, empathy, compassion and gratitude. It also sought to heighten awareness regarding the lives of others for example, food producers, to really understand and respect produce, and to their connection and encounter with others as part of their social gastronomy activities. Mindful creativity was explored through practical challenges. As active design partners students embraced their role in the decision-making process, influencing; the type of social-gastronomy activities they wished to engage with (such as feeding the homeless and food education for those in need), collaboration with industry and social partners, assessment methods, and were actively committed to ongoing review and project implementation.

The student showcase of learning was a live feedback session using the PERMA framework to prompt anonymous comments on their experience. This included questions relating to their engagement (as learners and as partners), positive emotions, positive relationships (connection with others), meaning and accomplishment (key learning). Students recorded their inputs on post-it notes, which were gathered and mapped to the poster for the PERMA related question.

A thematic analysis model was used to analyse the qualitative data presented to explore the patterns of shared meaning relating to the key concepts being tested (Braun and Clarke 2006). Word clouds were used to develop, interpret, and reflect on the key themes. The themes were then coded to create the relationship (Braun and Clarke 2019) to the PERMA Model, character strengths and the reflection. When asked to describe their experience, *Positive emotions* were used as descriptors by all the students. *Accomplishment* was measured by prompting them to record their greatest emotion in completion of the project, the key results being happiness, gratitude, pride and empathy. In analysing *Meaning*, character strengths of creativity, kindness, confidence and understanding came to the fore. Character strengths and positive emotions, gratitude, respect, kindness and teamwork, dominated the assessment of *Engagement* and *Positive relationships*.

Merging PH theories with *The Mindful Kitchen* trial experience resulted in the following insights on applying PH and PPC to CAE.

The Potential of Positive Education in Culinary Arts

As an educational approach that uses traditional skills and character development for happiness (Seligman et al. 2009), positive education is defined as a blend of teaching and learning practices with evidence-based learning taken from the science of positive psychology, which positively impacts student wellbeing (White 2016). "More well-being is synergistic with better learning" (Seligman et al. 2009, 294) which in turn, is an antidote to depression, increases life satisfaction, aids learning and creativity (Seligman et al. 2009). Oades et al. (2011) add that this definition must also include the learning environment that enables the students engage with the curricula. Whereas skills and creativity are inherent in CAE, character development and well-being are not given the same attention. According to Oades et al, the problem in most universities, is that while the focus is to develop the positive qualities of the students for a modern workplace, many of the practices are "at odds with contemporary models of education and evidence emerging from the scientific study of well-being" (2011, 433). In the author's opinion this should not deter the self-aware educator from applying it to their own course design and classroom environment. Such educators as leaders can only inspire others to follow suit.

Curriculum Design and Pedagogy

Through the curricula and pedagogy, contemporary CAE can easily be amended to institute cultural change for positive education. Curricula should embed ways of integrating student's exploration and self-awareness of the PERMA model in their lives, focused application to module content, creation of awareness of character strengths and their role in teamwork, promote greater opportunity for creativity in a relaxed environment, and allow for expression of self with others in a non-judgemental environment. This in turn will encourage the development of their PsyCap. For culinary students what makes them happy is when they are cooking, and so applying the above to a kitchen-related activity is a recipe for success. In so doing, educators are supporting the chefs "singing heart" and well-being. Encouraging altruistic activities for example using the power of food to benefit others, results in an increase in life-satisfaction (Buchanan and Bardi 2010), while class group performance can induce "flow", where they become one with the activity (Csikszentmihalyi 1997).

Student autonomy and motivation can be empowered by involving them in discussions regarding the learning environment, module content and assessment. For personal growth and flourishing, it is important to find novel ways of using their strengths (Keyes 2012). For group "flow" culinary sessions, the class debrief on challenges and successes could be reflected on through a character-strengths framework and rubric (Seligman 2009). The exploration of alternatives to assessments type and format, mirroring student engagement in applying positive education are encouraged, example the author tasked

students with a gratitude reflection recording "three good things" (Seligman et al. 2009) using an app. A gratitude-centred outlook heightens psychological, physical and social well-being (Emmons 2003). Another alternative to assessment is to have student goal diaries to assess their level of happiness and well-being (Schippers and Ziegler 2019) within culinary modules, but also for "life-crafting", helping them find purpose and meaning in life.

Key to enabling this change within the classroom is the educator's self-awareness (van Nieuwerburgh 2021) and positive self-development (Luthans and Avolio 2003, 251). This mindsight lens and the resulting qualities and presence, facilitates a river of integration, a flow that has the sense of harmony, is flexible, adaptive, coherent, energised and stable (Siegel 2009). The positive student-lecturer relationship that emerges can according to McGrath and Noble (2010), contribute to student well-being and learning outcomes.

Praising effort not intelligence is proposed by Dweck (2017). According to Meehan (2021) Dweck's growth mindset approach and the PERMA model for PH are a scaffold for learning. Educators can enable this in their approach to delivery and feedback. In addition, encouraging students to carve out "micro-moments" (Fredrickson 2001) of positivity will broaden and build greater connection to their learning and to others, along with resources for emotional and physical wellbeing.

The author has a particular interest in the use of contemplative pedagogy, an approach that focuses on connecting students to their lived, embodied experience of their own learning (Barratt 2016). This inherently supports the ethos of positive education. While teaching and coaching are not the same thing, in a positive education context the author proposes its creative use as a pedagogy and its potential application alongside contemplative pedagogy in the classroom. The link with mindfulness and coaching has already been mentioned. Within this same frame, coaching with compassion according to Boyatzis while enhancing well-being, "invokes a psychophysiological state that enables a person to be open to new possibilities and learning" (2013, 1530), and is therefore important for long-life learning and growth (O'Regan 2021). The PPC approach, through paying attention to existing strengths, available resources and psychological wellbeing, supports achievement of goals and improvement of quality of life, all of which are dependent on the self-aware educator, self-reflecting on how their attitudes, behaviour and thoughts about well-being influence others (van Nieuwerburgh 2021). Respecting PPC as a way of coaching, the author proposes that it has potential as a pedagogy in CAE collaboration between the educator and the students, where the educator uses PPC micro-coaching (Corbu 2021) to facilitate student learning and attainment of optimal performance of class goals particularly where there is a group flow activity for example a culinary event or project.

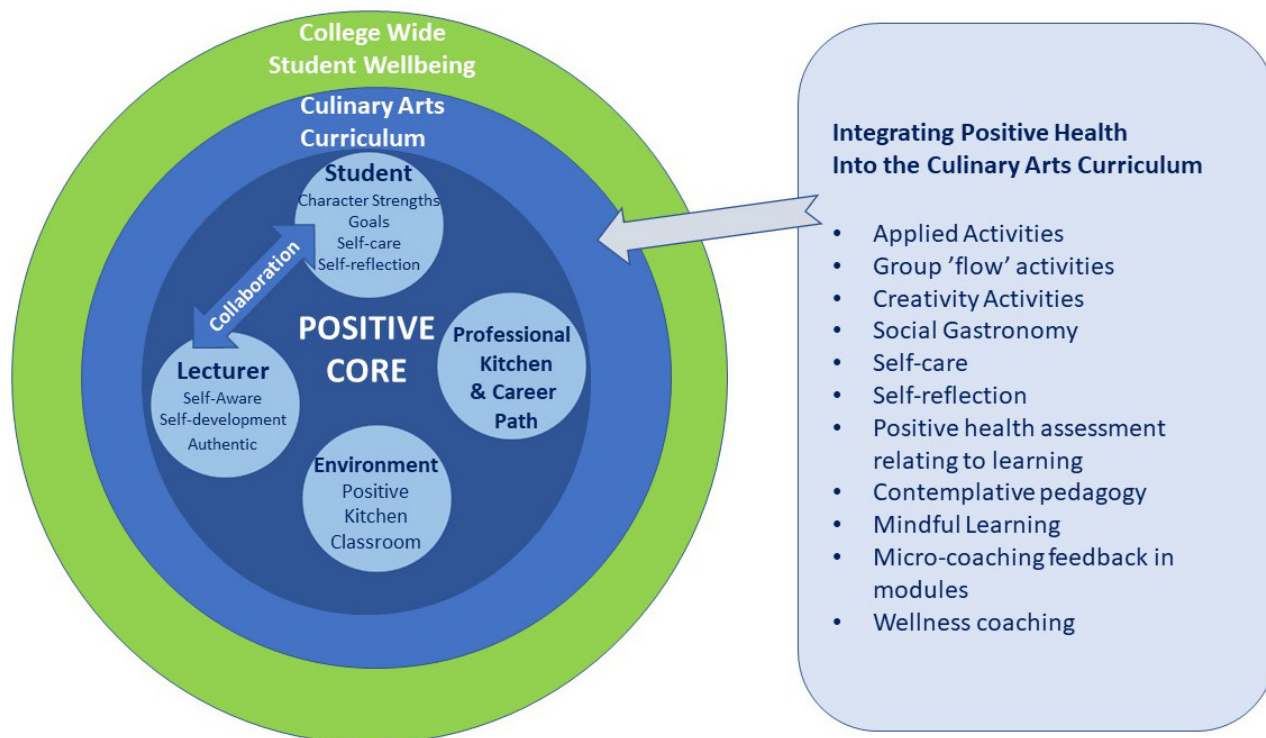


Figure 2. Positive Health and Well-being for Chefs, A New Model for Culinary Arts Education (Sweeney, 2021).

Transforming the Kitchens of the Future Through Positive Health Education

The goal of CAE is to empower graduates for a career in a professional kitchen. Programme design therefore must reflect change in culture and the needs of the student and the profession. Insights from research must inform this process. Living in lockdown due to COVID-19, was challenging for college entry students in 2020, in that their reporting of happiness and experience of positive emotions and physical health, was lower than their counterparts in 2015 (Quinn et al. 2021). Similarly, *The Burnt Chef Project* survey (2020), highlighted the growing prevalence of mental health issues in the industry, mirroring findings by Gallup (2021b; 2021c). Future industry leaders will have to create a culture of care (Remes 2020) as young Millennials and Gen Z graduates, in choosing an employer, are looking for an organisation that cares about their wellbeing (Gallup 2021a). As future leaders in professional kitchens they must also be enabled through their education to make this a reality.

'The Mindful Kitchen Project' (TMKP) for chefs, through the lens of 'mindful learning' in the classroom, promotes well-being, self-care, mindful food production and creativity (Sweeney 2020a). The author's personal reflection on her in-depth studies of positive health was a "trigger" to piloting the application of PH to TMKP resulting as mentioned earlier, in the design of a new module. Student engagement and learning from this signifies the importance of embedding PH in culinary arts education. Alongside the use of contemplative pedagogy, PPC will further support well-being and flourishing.

"In order to live in the world as reflective beings, humans need three things: they need to comprehend the world around them; they need to find direction in their actions; and they need to find worth in their lives" (Martela and Steger 2016, 541). To mirror graduate's expectations from their employer, culinary programmes now need to become more student-centred from a health and well-being perspective. The author therefore proposes the movement towards a positive education model for CAE (Figure 2). Essentially this is an applied model of care specific to CAE and further supported by an institute's overall wellbeing approach for students. The curriculum is delivered from a positive core founded on; a lecturer's authentic leadership collaborating with culinary students enabling the student's self-awareness for positive health, all of which takes place in a positive classroom environment, with industry facilitating student flourishing in the professional kitchen environment, encouraging a sustainable career path. Key to this new model of care is the integration of PH and PPC into the curriculum through a variety of activities previously outlined, that can support curriculum design and pedagogy (Figure 2). The author has also identified the need for "wellness coaching" as a stand-alone offering for students within TMKP, coaching with compassion to "demonstrate care for them and engender trust so they are open to imagining new pathways" (Work and Life 2019). Further research is required on determining the supports needed to enable culinary educators engage in implementing the model.

Conclusion: The Potential of Movement Inspired by Music

Seligman calls for the need for “a new prosperity that combines well-being and wealth, kindled by positive education” (2009, 308). This paper using Positive Health (PH) and Positive Psychology Coaching (PPC), justifies the application and potential, of integrating this science into culinary arts education (CAE) for current and future professional practice. This is a culture change in education. Authentic leadership, motivation, a growth mind-set and creative pedagogy will inspire the change to enable the educator make chefs heart sing. The educators that take this step have “heard the music to change the dance” (Quinn 2004, 2015) and are the pioneers of such change. May they be inspired by the quote below by Quinn (2015) as they empower chefs for positive health.

When I hear the music of the highest good and I begin to move my body to it, I get energized and the people around me get curious. Soon they hear the music, and their bodies begin to move in new ways. The great discovery is that the leader does not create the music. It is already there, and it is always changing. The leader's job is to hear the music and dance to it. When I do, some of the other people hear the music and the organization begins to move in a new way.

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