

**Freshly Squeezed “Sparkling Joy against the Odds” hosted by Dennis House  
May 11th, 2022  
Sophia Marangoudakis**

I attended Watkinson School’s Freshly Squeezed “Sparkling Joy against the Odds” event hosted by Dennis House, a host on CT WTNH television channel. The panelists, Gina Barreca, humorist and college professor at the University of Connecticut, Christine Lee, radio show host, and Devin Tulley, founder of IgniteHappy, all gave their insights on what joy is and the key to maintaining it. The common denominator of all things said was it all has to do with your mindset and the personal power you hold. Meaning that it is you that gets to control your emotions and how things affect you, and the way you look at the world. Joy comes from the inside. If you have a negative mindset, you will always believe the world is out to get you but when you have a positive mindset, you are happier and more open to new opportunities. As Ms. Barreca discussed, your emotions don’t define you but “life is absurd and if a terrible thing happens to you, the worst thing that will happen is you have a story!”. To know what happiness feels like you have to experience the opposite, so when we feel happy we really feel it and are.

Vulnerability was also discussed among the panelists, and when we, as humans, are vulnerable, it gets us telling stories and our thoughts, which forms meaningful connections that build trust ultimately forming joy. Having meaningful connections in our life is so important because it lets people feel that they belong and that they are being heard and understood. In our society, men are taught to not express their feelings and be strong but this creates a curtain from who they are to what society wants them to act like. Women are taught to be happy, elegant, and kind all the time and be “small”, because if you act crazy or outspoken or big, no man will want you. I understand and I agree but I think what it comes down is being who YOU are and who YOU want to be, because once you are on that path to doing so, your life will fall in line just like it is meant to be. I really liked this panel discussion. I definitely try and attend another Freshly Squeezed event. I agreed with it and I think it is so interesting how adults feel the same way as I do, especially how Social Media can really affect one’s mental health and joy. Social Media has become such an affluent part of society that it is a highlight reel of people’s life but it will always be there with new trends, cooking videos, sports recaps and so much more so it’s okay to take a break. It is managing your time on social media effectively and even hitting the block button, as Ms. Barreca stated. I think conversations like these are really intriguing and make me wonder more about the brain. A question I had for the panelists that I never got to ask was “Do you think there is a difference between joy and happiness?” I know, I think there is a difference between happiness and joy with happiness being short term and joy being long term.



**Gina Barreca**

**Darrin Tulley**

**Christine Lee**