

[Transcript] Global News Podcast / The Happy Pod

Hello, this is the Global News podcast from the BBC World Service with reports and analysis from across the world, the latest news seven days a week. BBC World Service podcasts are supported by advertising.

I'm Andrew Peach and this is Sophie, who's nine and whose voice note from Quito in Ecuador made me happy.

Hello there, people at the BBC World Service, that was my daughter, asking you to please produce and release a podcast of happy news every day along with that one of the normal news.

Thank you.

Thank you to Jose Nacio and Sophie, although I'm not sure we can manage every day just yet.

I think you liked our first happy pod.

Kiki in Paris emailed to say...

Thank you for the happy pod.

It's made my day.

Ben said...

Just wanted to add my name to the list of very happy listeners, absolutely loved it and can't wait for it to become part of my weekly routine.

And Suzanne, listening in Seattle, said...

Just listened to the happy pod.

I have to admit it was my first podcast ever.

Looking forward to hearing more happy news from around the world.

This is Anne and you're in luck.

On the way in the happy pod, Nicola in the US.

I am absolutely ecstatic and this is one of those rare moments where we can just celebrate for this really good news.

Paul in the UK.

My happy place is my allotment, just being outside, getting my hands dirty and growing things.

And a happy sound from Claire in Finland, but what is it?

There's just something about it that just makes me feel so happy and calm and it's one of the most innocent noises.

Plus the world's most positive uplifting news stories.

Do stay with us.

When a TV director from Pakistan posted a snapshot of one of his favourite places, he didn't expect the reaction he got, hundreds of people messaged Farooq Afzal Malik to say they couldn't believe the beauty of fairy meadows and they didn't realise Pakistan was so picturesque.

I asked Farooq to tell me more.

When I posted this picture on social media, people went crazy.

They were shocked.

They were amazed and they started asking questions and I started interacting every single one of them.

I answered a lot of questions.

People were amazed, really they didn't expect Pakistan to be like this, they were shocked. Well you can see the mountains in the background, it's a crisp clear day, the sun's in the sky, you can see beautiful trees in the valley and then in the meadow there's a pool of water off which the sun's reflecting and you can see all the image in the water, you can see the mountain and the trees, it's just perfect, isn't it?

You have described it beautifully but let me just tell you, the experience cannot be described in words, it's just the picture but the place is magical, it's heavenly.

When you posted this view online, what sort of reaction did you get from people?

Well the reaction was great, it was amazing, you know the thing is that people around the world have this perception about Pakistan which is not so good sadly.

They think that Pakistan is all about desert and we write cameras, they see all Pakistani men in beards and the thing women are covered in burqas from head to toe but this is not true actually, Pakistan has a lot more to offer to the world.

I mean Pakistan is home to 8 out of 14 highest peaks in the world including K2 which is the second most highest peaks in the world.

We have beaches, we have mountains, we have landscapes, we have winter ski festivals, we have music festivals and a lot more.

And as someone in Pakistan, how does that feel that the world sees Pakistan and perhaps instantly conjures up some of the country's problems whereas you're thinking, no, no, it's actually like this?

It is very, very disappointing and I actually feel this urge to tell Pakistan the other side of the story.

The picture is of the place named Ferry Meadows, the place is actually starting point for the trekkers and climbers to go to the base camp of the mountain that you can see in the picture. It's called Naam-e-Purbath, the literal meaning is the naked mountain but it is unofficially referred as the killer mountain because of the maximum number of deaths before its first ascent in 1953 by an Austrian climber I guess and he actually gave this place the name Ferry Meadows because of the beauty, the magical beauty of the place.

It was taken when me and my two friends went on a road trip from the capital Islamabad towards Punjab past that's Pakistan border up to the north, 750 kilometers.

And on our way, Ferry Meadows was on our bucket list, we had to go there.

The place is actually starting point for the trekkers and climbers to go to the base camp of the mountain.

I am actually a very frequent social media user.

I post pictures online, pictures of the food, restaurants, places I go to and last week a post from this group views from your window popped up on my wall and I instantly fell in love with it.

I found it very interesting that people from around the world were posting pictures from their windows, galleries and it's beautiful I guess and I saw it as an opportunity to showcase Pakistan to the world and I guess I did.

Thanks to Farooq.

There are lots of social media groups inviting you to post the view from your window, that kind of thing.

They are joyous ways to get glimpses of other parts of the world.

If you'd like to share yours with us, globalpodcast at bbc.co.uk.

Now anything that gets this reaction must surely be happy news.

After 20 years of talks, an agreement was struck at the UN in New York to protect the world's oceans.

One of those doing the cheering was Nicola Clark, who's an expert on oceans governance and spoke to me from Washington.

I am absolutely ecstatic.

You know, I feel like in the environmental world, in the ocean world, there's a lot of doom and gloom that's out there and this is one of those rare moments where we can just be incredibly joyful and take a moment to celebrate for this really good news that came out from the UN over the weekend.

You've been talking about this for 20 years, Nicola, which is an incredible length of time. That might explain some of the explosion of joy we heard when it was announced, including from you by the way.

What does it mean?

What difference is it going to make?

So the high seas cover half of our planet and they actually make up two-thirds of our ocean and I think everyone is fairly familiar with the threats that our ocean faces from climate change and ocean acidification and just increasing pressures from increasing uses of human activity, fishing and shipping and possibly mining in the not too distant future.

The problem with the high seas is that they are international waters so we don't have or we didn't have, I should say, before this new treaty.

We didn't have a lot of tools in our tube belt that we could use to actually address any of these threats and that's what this new treaty does.

So this historic moment that happened late on Saturday evening was really just the first step.

And one thing I love about this story is that almost everything we hear about the climate and all the environment is being told that it's too late, it's too little, we'll never sort all this out.

Well, this is a step in the other direction.

Absolutely.

I mean, this is not too little.

I think this is absolutely an enormous opportunity.

It's half of the surface of our planet and it's two-thirds of the ocean that are going to be impacted by this new agreement.

Nicola Clarke who told me after we'd spoken how much she enjoys the Global News podcast every day.

Nicola, great to have you listening.

Now, I love going to the Eurovision Song Contest.

I've been to it in Germany, Turkey, Sweden, all over the continent and when it was last in the UK 25 years ago.

This year it should be in Ukraine, but because of the Russian invasion, it's in the British city of Liverpool.

An estimated 160 million people will watch on television around the world.
And with only 6,000 tickets on sale to each of the live shows, it was always going to be a bit of a scramble to get hold of one.
But Lucy Wilson managed it.
I honestly don't know where I got my luck to be honest.
I was very, very lucky, but yeah, it was very nerve-wracking.
I was shaking and once it was confirmed, I was like, oh, thank goodness.
I'm also going with my brother as well.
It's always been like a family tradition.
So like watch Eurovision every single year, it's always been our favourite thing.
And yeah, it's going to be a crazy, crazy weekend.
You might remember the winner of last year's Eurovision Song Contest was the Kalush orchestra.
Abbe, listening to the happy part in Nigeria, says he loves listening to it.
Abbe says, I love it because the Ukrainian singers found their voice in spite of the invasion and still won the Eurovision Song Contest.
This is an encouragement not to let situations weigh me down.
Other happy sounds you've kindly sent in this week include this from Lyubov from Sofia in Bulgaria.
Lyubov recorded the gurgling of coffee brewing in his large, thick-bottomed, cast-iron Cuban coffee pot.
He says it kickstarts his morning after a dog walk.
David listened to the first happy pod and really enjoyed it.
He's an expat living in Gulfport, Mississippi.
He says the sound that makes him happy is the band of the Coldstream Guards.
This is Imperial Echoes by the band of the Coldstream Guards, my favourite sound.
Thanks David.
And Lisa from Raleigh in North Carolina sent us this.
I would say pigeons.
I lived in Paris for 20 years and I miss the cooing of pigeons on my windows so much that I found YouTube videos of pigeons and I love them and my cat loves them, so yes, pigeons.
We would like to hear about the sound that makes you happy.
Email globalpodcast@bdc.co.uk and if you can record the sound and send it to us as a voice note, even better, globalpodcast@bbc.co.uk.
International Women's Day marked the achievements of women across the world and highlighted issues affecting women from abuse and violence to access to education.
For the first time ever, a woman is NASA's head of science.
Dr Nicola Fox's dad made her watch the moon landing when she was nine months old.
She hasn't looked back since.
She's been talking to Simon Jack.
It is the role of a lifetime.
I actually described it as the best job on the planet, so I could not be more excited.
I've always been really excited about exploration, about all the things that we study, the sun, all the other stars, all the planets.

It's just always been a real passion of mine, but growing up in Hitchin in Hertfordshire, you don't really dream of working for NASA, but it certainly doesn't seem like it's something that could ever be a reality, so I was very lucky.

I was at a meeting when I was doing my postgraduate work at Imperial College and I went to a meeting

in Alaska and I was talking very excitedly about my work that I was doing for my PhD and a scientist basically said, could I interest you in a postdoc at NASA?

People say you always have these pivotal moments in your life, you know.

That was the pivotal moment and I sort of said, well, yes, actually, I would.

What do your parents make of this, must be as proud as punch?

My parents are completely over the moon, had to use that one, about this.

My dad was really, when I was the heliophysics division director just till last Monday, my dad loved to tell everyone that, oh, my daughter's a director at NASA.

At first, I was kind of embarrassed and I'd sort of say, well, it's not that big of a deal, I'm not like a director or anything.

Then I realized, well, actually, it's a big deal to him.

I'm kind of living his dream.

I'm working for NASA.

My mom often doesn't get the credit in my story because it was my dad that was the big space nut.

My mom was the one who always made sure she may not have dreamed of walking on the moon, but she was going to make certain that I had every opportunity I needed if I wanted to.

She's sort of the quiet, determined person that really made me the determined person that I am.

They are both incredibly proud of me and dreams can come true.

Nicola Fox, the first woman to become NASA's head of science.

Now this could be useful advice to make us all happier.

You could take up a sport, cook an interesting recipe or escape into the pages of a book.

For the American writer and journalist Jason Heller and his wife, Angie, they boosted their level of happiness by ensuring they didn't do any work at all at the weekend.

Just relaxed.

Here's Judy Frankel.

It was during COVID that Jason and Angie decided to do something about their work-life balance.

It just really got to the point where, with both of us working remotely from home, that the line had just been completely obliterated between what our work time, what our leisure time was, and it was a way of trying to set those boundaries back.

But they didn't book a holiday to the Caribbean or take out an expensive gym membership or make lunch dates with friends.

So what did they do?

I could sum it up in one word, nothing.

We make it more or less a policy that we do not get out of bed right away, aside from making some coffee maybe when we wake up.

We're going to try to ease into the day by just lying in bed and watching some television or a movie before we even get up and about for any real reason.

And although at first friends and family thought they were being selfish, Jason is convinced that having one day a week doing nothing has huge benefits and has improved his marriage. The fact that we're just conditioned so much to get up and get something moving, get something started, to be able to just stop and say, like, no, no, I don't have to do that.

I don't have to dispense anything.

I can just stop being for however short amount of period on a Sunday morning.

I can just be completely inert and this is okay and maybe even biologically we're made to be that way.

Of course, this may not be practical for everyone, particularly if you have children, but Jason says we should all give it a go, even if it's just for half a day here and there.

Anything that's a conscious cessation of movement for a little bit and it allows you to connect and communicate with people around you, these days it feels like we really have to stop and draw a line somewhere.

Julie Frankel reporting.

Coming up, the smart suit that's changing children's lives.

I feel like it's very comfortable and I hope it will help me in fulfilling my dream.

That and more on the way in the happy pot.

We love hearing the happy news from your part of the world and the sound that makes you happy.

Email [globalpodcast at bbc.co.uk](mailto:globalpodcast@bbc.co.uk), send us a voice note if you can.

Claire got in touch from Finland to tell us about the sound that makes her happy.

It's the sound that your cat makes when you sort of unexpectedly place your hand on them when they're sleeping and they kind of make like a little chirpy, trilling noise.

I call that the cat activation noise.

I know exactly what you mean as the owner of two cats, they're usually cuddled up on a duvet or a blanket or something like that, perhaps where they shouldn't be.

You come along, you're as gentle as you possibly can, you pick them up and they make that noise.

And can you tell me why it makes you happy?

I suspect this is all to do with pet ownership but tell me.

There's just something about it that just makes me feel so happy and calm and it's one of the most innocent noises because it's like acknowledging that you are there and you're allowed to interact with them when they're most vulnerable and it's one of the sounds that I would really miss not being able to hear.

What people listening to our happy pod won't know yet is that you're someone Claire with hearing impairment, which is interesting because I guess when we asked you to get in touch if there was a sound that made you happy, it hadn't really crossed our mind that people with hearing impairment would be rushing into our email inbox, so tell me a bit more about that.

What sounds are you able to hear and what can you know here?

I experienced a traumatic head injury which left me with complete hearing loss in part my range and in my left ear.

So there are only some sounds that I can hear easily and if there's multiple people speaking with multiple sources of sound, it's very hard for me to identify where those sounds are or who's making what sound.

We actually use our two ears to echolocate sounds, so if you don't have hearing in one of your ears as I do, you won't be able to echolocate the sound.

You won't be able to tell where that sound is coming from, which is very disorientating.

I don't think people know that about people who have experienced hearing loss.

It's incredibly disorientating even if you can still hear some sounds.

The other thing that surprises me, perhaps because I'm terribly naive, I don't know, is that someone with hearing impairment would find joy in sounds because I guess in many ways sounds are a problem for you and yet you're talking about the kind of joy that they might bring you, the happiness they might bring you.

I would say that maybe even make me more happy than somebody who is experiencing the full range of hearing and isn't experiencing deaf gain or hearing loss, depending on how you think about it, because I can appreciate and other people with hearing loss can maybe appreciate the sort of capacity of that sound and the privilege that it is to be able to hear it, and especially as I said, I'm going to be losing more and more of my hearing over time, so every moment that I get to hear that noise or any of the other noises is sort of like a joy.

Thanks to Claire, email [globalpodcast at bbc.co.uk](mailto:globalpodcast@bbc.co.uk).

No sound is too everyday, no sound is too unusual, as long as it makes you happy.

15-year-old Eli Crossley is a musician studying in London.

He has muscular dystrophy and uses a wheelchair, but his mum's helped develop a prototype super suit which could transform his life and help others.

The story from Francis Reid.

Eli Crossley loves music, whether it's writing it or performing on his ukulele.

He also has Duchenne muscular dystrophy, which means his limbs will eventually weaken.

Last year he stopped walking, but his mother has helped develop a suit that she hopes will allow him to continue his passion.

The technology involved assists Eli by providing support for his arms.

Eli says the prototype has worked well.

I feel like it's very comfortable and I hope it will help me in fulfilling my dream to hopefully one day play at Glastonbury with my band.

Together with a company in the US, the family have been developing the suit for the last four years and are hoping to make ten more prototypes to test its development.

Eli's mother Emily Rubin says she designed the technology so that teenagers would want to use it.

What we want to do is develop a suit that's going to be attractive and desirable for disabled people because too often the products that they get sold are just not designed with desirability in mind.

So we want this to be a really functional suit that will help with being able to brush your teeth or give your mum a hug, all the little things that are actually the really big thing.

She's aiming to make the prototype more sophisticated and the family's hope is that it won't just help people with muscular dystrophy.

Obviously I think it's the first step towards something amazing and I think it won't just stop here.

I feel like this could lead to many more designs, not just helping people with my condition but people with spinal injuries, war veterans and all these people who deserve to be helped. They're planning to get their design on the market in the next three years, giving the organisers of Glastonbury plenty of notice to reserve the pyramid stage for Eli's band. Francis Reed reports again here's hoping Eli gets to play the Glastonbury Festival. Now in the last happy pod we found it's often the sounds of wildlife that make us happy. A new study suggests that bumblebees are good at team working and solving puzzles and scientists in London trained a set of bees to open a puzzle box containing a sugar reward. They then found the insects passed on the knowledge they had to each other. They say the research shows that the insects are intelligent and that not only instinct but also social learning plays a large role in societies of bees, ants and wasps. The sounds of wildlife definitely make Paul happy. We got in touch with Paul who's in Leicestershire in central England when he posted on social media using the hashtag happy. I was in what I call my happy place which is by allotment in the village of Ibstock where I live. And what was going on at the time you having a little break? So it was the end of day I had about four or five hours on the allotment lots of digging lots of planting and I just sat down I just boiled the kettle which is on a little stove within the shed sat down with a cup of tea the sun was setting the birds were tweeting and it was just an end of day break and it was just delightful. Nice and the allotment and gardening is obviously something that you love. Tell me why, why does being there make you happy? You know what it's being outside I mean I'm relatively new to allotment growing I got my allotment two years ago and I think it was within the first week of having the allotment I just knew it was it was my happy place and it was being outside and a few of my friends have asked me you know what what makes the allotment work for you what makes you so happy and and I say it's just being in touch with nature I think you know just being there getting your hands dirty nurturing a seed watching it grow and you're kind of like connected to wildlife while you're there I mean I've got I've got some feral cats that come along and see me there's a fox that rustles in the bushes you know the birds in the robins come in land just by you as you're doing stuff it's it's being in touch with nature I think. What sort of thing are you growing? I grow lots of vegetables lots of fruit and it's vegetables that you wouldn't typically eat before so it's things like kohlrabi it's a whole range of vegetables and fruit but also flowers and and that just brings a whole new subset of nature to the allotment it's great. They're not that easy to grow I know but you want to get some salad crops in you can't get tomatoes or lettuces anywhere in Europe you'd make a bomb. Absolutely absolutely now if you could see me just now behind me in the room I'm sat in on my windowsill is a whole range of tomato seeds sprouting and growing in readiness. Now I've enjoyed growing fruit and vegetables but but in the garden in a bit of garden I've got behind where I live I imagine on an allotment you've got the added benefit of it being a bit of a community so there are other people there who you can spend time with who you

might be able to ask advice from.

It's the best part of allotment life that the community is amazing and I've made some really really good friends and strong friends over the last two years and that's part of the formula you know just connecting with other people you know and a diverse range of people and at all age levels.

Does it get a bit competitive?

It does we run a horticultural show every year and so the allotment is all about gearing up and prepping for the horticultural show you know who can grow the biggest onion, who can grow the longest run of bean, who can grow the biggest carrot, who can grow you know a humongous sunflower so it can get quite competitive in that way but it's fun competition.

Just listened to the tranquility of Paul's allotment thanks Paul.

Next week on The Happy Pot.

I have a huge flock of sheep but they're not for me it's my sheep a wolf rock so they're like my friends really and so it's a demanding job but it's a very fulfilling job you're very close to nature and I think it's where that you know the word happy comes in a lot because if I wasn't happy doing this job I think it could be quite miserable because it is hard work but it's incredibly beautiful.

Looking forward to hearing from Alison and just like Alison we'd like you to get involved.

Help us align with the happy news from your part of the world and do send us the sound that makes you happy.

Our email address is globalpodcast at bbc.co.uk.

Voice notes are good because that means we might get to hear you next time.

We started this edition with nine-year-old Sophia in Quito.

Sophia I hope we lived up to your expectations and from me I am True Peach and The Happy Squad.

Olivia Noon, Tracy Gordon, Tom Ward and our editor Karen Martin.

Thank you for listening.

The Happy Squad is back next week.