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my happy place is...  
**under a big whale**

By Jessi Klein, writer and comedian



SOME PEOPLE, WHEN they are anxious, turn to chocolate (which can be fun). Others choose exercise (meh). When I'm really freaking out about life, nothing makes me feel as happy and calm as going to the Museum of Natural History in New York City, where I head straight to the Hall of Ocean Life to lie flat on the floor (the security guards are surprisingly OK with this) and stare up at the full-size replica of a giant blue whale.

Some history: When I was a kid, we would occasionally take school trips to see this same

whale. At that age, her size was frightening to me. While the other kids would lie underneath her, I'd hide behind the crab display.

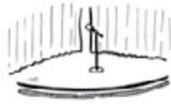
Decades later, after a stint living on the West Coast, I returned to New York, believing that my long-distance boyfriend was ready to commit. I overlooked one small detail: He wasn't. So my bestie GF, bless her heart, dragged me out of bed for a reunion visit with our old whale friend. It had been years since I'd seen the giant beast, and unlike most things from childhood, which become less impressive with the passage of time, she looked better than ever. We sprawled out on the floor and looked up. Something about her awesome scope gave me the thing I'd been

missing those last few weeks: perspective. I was reminded that the world abounds with magic and mystery—stuff that is all too easy to ignore when you're saving grumpy emails to your ex in a drafts folder.

I go lie under the whale every few months. No matter what's going on in my life, it always makes me feel relaxed and reinvigorated. And when you're getting over a breakup, there's really no better way to remember that there are always other fish in the sea.

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my happy place is...  
**onstage**

By Kat Ahn, stand-up comic



THE DANK SMELL of cheap sour mix and old beer permeates my

nostrils before I step onto the stage of a Hollywood-area comedy club on Sunset Boulevard. Those moments are accompanied by pain and awkwardness. Often, I'm one of the few females in a room full of male comics. Sometimes I feel completely naked and vulnerable. Then a slightly jaded host calls out to the crowd that this next girl is from Philly, she's shy, she's Asian, she's... Kat Ahn! A few awkward glances land in my direction, but hardly anyone looks up from their vodka sodas. No matter. I grab the mike, and whatever the audience perception of me was before I started talking, now they see a Korean-American gal telling jokes, rapping and making them belly

laugh. *This* is happiness: For seven minutes, I'm the thing I want to be—a badass, hilarious, creative chick. The girl who owns who she is and is proud.

• • •  
my happy place is...  
**the beach**

By Patricia Engel, author of *Vida*



SOMETIMES I COME here for the sunset, the pink and lavender sky. Sometimes I come at night, when the horizon becomes pearly below the glow of the moon. I come for inspiration, for solace and for answers to internal questions, be they of plots for one of my books, professional dilemmas or relationship struggles. Sometimes I come

**The Happy Place Chain** One woman's heaven is another woman's hometown. We followed the happy full circle.



"I live at the beach, but my happy place is **the Alps...**"

"My home is the Cayman Islands, and it's like being on vacation every day! But my happy place is in the snow—a sunny day in the Alps is just as good to me as a day on the beach is to other people. I grew up skiing, and the mountains are just so gorgeous. I feel relaxed there."  
—Maya Ogorzalek, 27



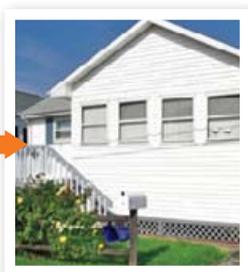
"I live in the Alps, but my happy place is **Tuscany...**"

"My husband and I live in a tiny town called Barberaz in the French Alps, and you can't compare its beauty to anything. But before we moved here, I studied in Tuscany, which is my happy place. The people there have such passion. There's warmth, laughter and loudness every day."  
—Cynthia Caughey Annet, 52



"I live in Tuscany, but my happy place is an **Orioles game...**"

"In Tuscany I'm surrounded by green and sunshine. And the wine, the olive groves...this is a very wonderful place. But there's nowhere I'm happier than at a Baltimore Orioles game, sitting in box seats and eating curly fries with my kids. Now that I live far away, it's what I miss most."  
—Jodi Cutler, 39



"I live for Orioles games, but my happy place is my **grandma's house...**"

"I've been an Orioles fan forever. Even if the team loses—which they often do—I still enjoy going to the games. But my happy place? It's my grandparents' house in Connecticut. My grandmother made the best pancakes! My favorite memories are from the times I stayed there."  
—Kerrin Kastorf, 29



"I live in that house, but my happy place is **the beach!**"

"When my grandchildren were small, they'd come stay with us. My happy place is whenever I'm with them—especially times we spend together at the beach. I still love seeing them, even though they're all grown-up."  
—Renee Chudzik, 80, Kerrin's grandmother  
—Jessica Duncan