Steps to Constructing a Concept Map

Adapted from Borrego *et al*. 2009

1. Write down the major terms or concepts you know about a selected topic (e.g. happiness or atmospheric aerosols).
2. Write each concept or term on a separate sticky note.
3. Sort through the sticky notes, putting terms you do not understand to one side. Also put aside those that are not related to any other term. The sticky notes left over are the ones we will use the construct the concept map.
4. Arrange the sticky notes so that related concepts are close to each other.
5. Stick the sticky notes to a piece of paper as soon as you are satisfied with the arrangement. Place the most broad/inclusive concepts near the top. Leave a little space for the connecting lines you’ll draw.
6. Draw lines between the concepts you think are related.
7. Write on each line the nature of the relationship between the concepts.
8. If you put any cards aside in step 3, go back and see if some of them will fit into the concept map you have constructed. If they do, be sure to add the lines and relationships of the new items. Add question marks to any concepts/relationships that you are not sure about and want to explore further.

*One extra note: Concept mapping is a creative activity with many possible “correct” answers. As your understanding of relationships between concepts change, so will your concept maps.*

**Part 1: Group Concept Maps (before the break)**

Your assignment today will be to construct a concept map about “happiness” in groups of 2 or 3. Write this term at the top or center of your large sheet of paper, then brainstorm related ideas on the sticky notes provided, arrange them, and draw relevant links between concepts, using linking words to highlight relationships.

**Part 2: Personal Concept Maps (after the break)**

Your assignment today will be to construct a concept map about “sustainable synthesis”. Write this term at the top or center of your large sheet of paper, then brainstorm related ideas on the sticky notes provided, arrange them, and draw relevant links.