

Hope

What is Hope?

According to Snyder et al. (1991) hope is a positive cognitive state based on a sense of successful goal-directed determination and planning to meet these goals. In other words, hope is like a snap-shot of a person's current goal-directed thinking, highlighting the motivated pursuit of goals and the expectation that those goals can be achieved.

Hope is a desire with a belief about something, especially something good, to happen. In general, hope means a positive wish for things to improve for the better, and to have a positive expectation for that better future.

Hope is defined as “the process of thinking about one’s goals, along with the motivation to move towards those goals (agency) and the ways to achieve those goals (pathways)” (Snyder, 1995).

“Hope is the perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals, and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways” (Snyder, 2002).

According to Snyder’s Hope Theory (Snyder, Irving, & Anderson, 1991), hopefulness is a life-sustaining human strength comprised of three distinct but related components:

1. **Goals Thinking** – the clear conceptualization of valuable goals.

2. ***Pathways Thinking*** – the capacity to develop specific strategies to reach those goals.
3. ***Agency Thinking*** – the ability to initiate and sustain the motivation for using those strategies.

Hope does not necessarily fade in the face of adversity; in fact hope often endures despite poverty, war and famine. While no one is exempt from experiencing challenging life events, hope fosters an orientation to life that allows a grounded and optimistic outlook even in the most challenging of circumstances.

According to Snyder (2000) hope has 3 necessary ingredients:

Goal-oriented Thoughts

Non-random human behaviors are directed by some goal, either short-term or long-term. Goals need to be of sufficient value to the Individual so as to occupy conscious thoughts. Goals should be attainable yet challenging in nature. Goals that are 100% likely to be achieved do not give people hope.

Pathways to Achievement

In order to achieve goals people need to generate plausible routes to achieve goals. This type of thought processes begin in infancy when cause and effect relationships are first being understood. Singular or multiple pathways need to be generated when obstacles are faced. Those with the highest levels of hope tend to generate multiple pathways to goal achievement.

Agency Thoughts

In this motivational component to hope, people believe that they can initiate and sustain the pathways to goal achievement. This type of thought begins after one year of age when children realize they are actors who can influence their environment and initiate cause and effect relationships.

Examples of Hope

1. Realistic Hope

Realistic hope is hope for an outcome that is reasonable or probable (Wiles, Cott, & Gibson, 2008). In this sense, an individual suffering from chronic pain might hope for a small reduction in pain, knowing that complete eradication is unrealistic.

According to Eaves, Nichter, and Ritenbaugh (2016) being realistic is a way of hoping that allows individuals to observe and understand their situation while still maintaining openness toward the possibility of positive change.

2. Utopian Hope

This way of hoping is a collectively oriented hope that collaborative action can lead to a better future for all. According to (Webb, 2013) the utopian hoper critically negates the present and is driven by hope to affirm a better alternative. Consider utopian hope presented by a political movement; a movement that effectively articulates the hopes of a social group to expand the horizons of possibility.

3. Chosen Hope

Hope not only helps us live with a difficult present but also with an uncertain future. In addition to physical suffering, a diagnosis of a serious or terminal illness is a major contributor to psychiatric syndromes and distress. Understandably, multiple factors such as grief, fear, and concerns about loved ones can contribute to experiences of hopelessness within this population.

In the palliative care context, for instance, chosen hope is critical to the management of despair and its accompanying paralysis of action. Garrard and

Wrigley (2009) suggested that hope for even the most restricted range of goals within the limits of a life is essential to the regulation of negative emotions.

4. Transcendent Hope

According to Eaves, Nichter, and Ritenbaugh (2016), transcendent hope encompasses three types of hope, namely:

1. *Patient Hope* – a hope that everything will work out well in the end.
2. *Generalized Hope* – hope not directed toward a specific outcome.
3. *Universal Hope* – a general belief in the future and a defense against despair in the face of challenges.

Also referred to as existential hope, transcendent hope describes a stance of general hopefulness not tied to a specific outcome or goal; put simply, it is the hope that something good can happen.

Benefits of Having Hope

1. Hope is significantly correlated with superior academic and athletic performance, greater physical and psychological **well-being**, improved self-esteem, and enhanced interpersonal relationships (Rand & Cheavens, 2012).

2. Hope has the potential to enhance well-being over time. Erez and Isen (2002) found that individuals who are more hopeful and expect to be successful in achieving goals are more likely to experience a state of well-being.
3. Individuals with high hope are more likely to view stressful situations as challenging rather than threatening, thereby reducing the intensity and hindering the proliferation of stress (Lazarus & Launier, 1978).
4. Hope can be perceived as a protective factor against the development of chronic anxiety. Michael (2000) found that hope correlates significantly and negatively with anxiety, while also protecting against perceptions of vulnerability, uncontrollability, and unpredictability.
5. Hope is a motivational factor that helps initiate and sustain action toward long-term goals, including the flexible management of obstacles that get in the way of goal attainment. High-hope individuals can conceptualize their goals clearly; establishing goals based on their own previous performances. In this way, hopeful individuals have greater control over how they will pursue goals and are intrinsically motivated to find multiple pathways to successful goal attainment (Conti, 2000).

6. Snyder et al. (2002) found that high hope college students were more likely to graduate than their low hope counterparts. Their findings indicated that students with low hope graduated at an overall 40.27% rate as compared with 56.50% of high-hope students. Additionally, low hope students were also at greater risk of being dismissed (25%) relative to their high hope peers (7.1%).
7. Hope is positively related to overall life satisfaction (Roesch & Vaughn, 2006).
8. Hope, with its in-built orientation towards the future, motivates individuals to maintain their positive involvement in life regardless of any limitations imposed upon them (Rideout & Montemuro, 1986).