



Hope in uncertain times

WHAT

According to social scientists, there's a difference between hope and optimism - one that's important for our capacity to be resilient. We feel optimistic when we look to the future and believe good things will happen. But we feel hope when we stare into that future, anticipate the positive outcome, and believe we have a role in helping to shape it.

WHY

Hope, or having both the willpower and waypower to achieve one's goals, has been researched for over 30 years. [At work](#), having hope is significantly related to increased performance. Hopeful

employees have higher job satisfaction, well-being, and commitment to their organizations. They also report less stress and burnout.

Beyond work, a [recent study](#) found that older adults (average age 66) with higher hope were more likely to have better physical, psychological, and social well-being and reduced risks of cancer, chronic conditions, sleep problems, chronic pain, and dying. On the flip side, those who feel hopeless have an elevated risk of anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder. Having hope may be the best protection against a more difficult tomorrow.

HOW CAN I USE THIS

Hope helps us stay resilient by focusing us on the future we want to create and enabling productive action to get there. Here are some strategies to stay hopeful in challenging times.

- **Recalibrate goals.** It can be unsettling when our longer-term aspirations are suddenly uncertain. We feel hope when we can control some aspect of our future and see ourselves getting closer to making it a reality. In the face of ambiguity, awaken your [hope circuit](#) by engaging in micro-goals. If your business plans suddenly seem unviable, break down how you might pivot into smaller steps and focus on one at a time. Maybe success today is just planning a meeting with those who can help you think it through.
- **Retrace your steps:** Looking back at when we made it through tough times in the past can bolster our confidence in the present. Map out the steps you took to tackle the challenges then. Who helped you along the way? What can you learn from your past wins that will help you take productive action today?
- **Reimagine what's possible:** If accomplishing your goal were a movie, what would be the best possible outcome at the end? What obstacles might you encounter on your journey? What are multiple ways you might overcome them? Proactively thinking through the outcomes, barriers and enablers of your goals increases the likelihood you'll meet them.

HOW CAN I HELP OTHERS

If you lead a team, you play a big role in [making hope happen](#). Understand the three fundamental ingredients of hope:

- **Goals:** Help your colleagues set clear, attainable and motivating goals; encourage them to use the [WOOP model](#) to make sure they are setting the right goals for right now.

- **Will-power:** We all need self-efficacy, the belief we have the ability to make our goals a reality. You can vicariously boost the self-efficacy of your colleagues by expressing confidence in them and telling them how you believe they can be successful.
- **Way-power:** Invite your colleagues to generate many pathways to achieving their goals. Encourage them to think of the obstacles that may get in their way and then use their [strengths](#) to overcome them.

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