

The Power of Hope and Optimism



We have all heard the phrase “April showers bring May flowers.” While most of us are certainly ready for flowers by the time May arrives, this phrase also has a deeper meaning. It is a reminder that unpleasant things can bring about positive outcomes. This phrase also encourages us to maintain an optimistic attitude and a sense of hope.

Hope and optimism are similar but distinct concepts. Both are positively correlated to health and resilience, but while hope is more directly related to personal belief, optimism is more directly connected to expectations.

- **Hope:** Hope typically refers to a feeling often connected to motivation. A hopeful individual is more likely to believe they have the power to reach their goals. Hope is the belief that your future will be better than the present and that you have the ability to make it happen. It involves both optimism and a can-do attitude.
- **Optimism:** Optimism refers to a person’s expectations for the future. It is a tendency to look on the more favorable side of events or conditions and to expect the most favorable outcome. When someone is optimistic, they are likely to believe that what they hope for will eventually come to pass.

Although hope and optimism are two different things, one isn't nearly as beneficial without the other. Optimism is a mental attitude that heavily influences physical and mental health, as well as coping with everyday social and working life. Optimism can also promote a sense of well-being during difficult times. Likewise, while hope certainly involves our emotions, hope itself is not an emotion. Hope is a way of thinking or a state of being that is more directly connected to goals and personal motivation. People with higher levels of optimism and hope have been found to be better at withstanding uncertainty and have less fear of the unknown. They cope and adapt better in challenging or stressful times and tend to be more personally resilient.

If you are trying to cultivate more optimism and hope in your life, know that this goal is possible. Working with a compassionate and trained counselor or therapist can help you develop the skills you need to foster an optimistic and hopeful perspective while developing your coping skills and resilience.

References:

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<https://www.dhs.gov/employee-resources/news/2023/01/18/optimism-and-its-impact-mental-health>
<https://www.kansashealthsystem.com/health-resources/turning-point/programs/resilience-toolbox/hope-and-optimism/difference-between-hope-and-optimism>

If you would like assistance or support in cultivating hope and optimism in your life, please contact the Aurora EAP.

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