



Cultivating Hope Skills for Healing and Well-being

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Learning to “raise” hope in our lives is something each of us can do. With guidance, intentionality, and patience, you can find support to cultivate hope as part of your mental health and well-being journey.

Studies have shown that learning to raise hope can support you as an individual, and as a member of your community, to cope in daily life and arm you with tools to maintain hope – even in tough times. Remember, hope-raising skills enable you to maintain a sense of optimism and possibility by shifting your daily focus to:

- Achievable goals
- Flexible pathways to reach your goals
- Your ability to take action and gain strength each day



An example: Working through adversity with hope

Have you thought about the difference between coping and healing through adversity – and how hope plays a central role? The differences between the two can be illustrated with the following example:

Imagine you’ve been struggling with feeling isolated at work or school due to microaggressions. Coping might look like getting through the day by distracting yourself or avoiding interactions that feel

harmful. While this helps you to survive, it doesn’t address the deeper painful toll this experience may have on you.

Healing, on the other hand, uses hope to move forward toward thriving. You may set an intention to join a supportive group that understands your experiences (goal), consider different ways to connect with them in the workplace or instead build community in a digital space (pathways), and remind yourself that you have the power and wisdom to seek environments that affirm your identity and your well-being (agency).

Three Skills to Go from Coping to Thriving

These three hope-raising skills can transform your approach from just getting by to actively seeking healing and growth. This helps you reap the benefits of committing to your mental health and emotional well-being. This approach is sometimes described as radical healing and draws upon the science of hope in powerful ways. Select one or more to add to your personal toolbox for raising hope in daily life.



- 1. Create goals** to help you achieve clarity and purpose, which cultivates hope levels in your life.
 - a. **Set Small, Achievable Goals:** Focus on a few short-term, manageable mini-goals to build up a sense of accomplishment and reinforce your hope level.
 - b. **Visualize Future Success:** Use visualization techniques to imagine a positive outcome related to your goal, as this can reinforce a sense of hope rooted in a clear direction.
 - c. **Develop a Hope Plan:** Write a plan with clear steps toward achieving your personal goal, ensuring it feels connected to a larger purpose.

- 2. Identify pathways** to help maintain the flexibility you need in your daily life and increase your problem-solving skills.
 - a. **Identify Alternative Pathways:** Practice brainstorming different ways to reach a goal when the original path is blocked. Engaging in this in advance may shorten the time needed and reduce the stress impacts of a pathway not being successful.
 - b. **Reframe Challenges:** Intentionally view obstacles as opportunities to grow, learn, and strengthen resilience rather than seeing them as setbacks.
 - c. **Engage in Reflective Writing:** Write about the paths you have already taken and how they have led to your growth; this can reinforce your belief in the possibility of new ways forward.

- 3. Take action** and know that you have agency to support your sense of personal empowerment and raise your confidence in being able to exert control over areas of your life.
 - a. **Create a Personal Mantra:** Develop a culturally resonant mantra or affirmation that reminds you of your strength, power and internal wisdom to navigate challenges.
 - b. **Celebrate Small Wins:** Acknowledge even the smallest steps forward to offer yourself proof of your agency and capabilities.
 - c. **Explore Self-Compassion Practices:** Self-compassion is a tool for being kind and loving towards yourself in the midst of setbacks. It supports your moving forward towards existing or new goals and pathways.



Ready to try it?

Grab a pen and paper (or your phone or laptop) and make a plan to cultivate hope each day. Set goals, identify the routes to your goals and then take action. Remember, making progress in our lives and on our mental health journeys takes time. But, by acting, reflecting, and trying again, we can find the help, hope, and healing we need to thrive.