Building inner resilience

Children with high levels of hope also experience supportive environments especially with parents and teachers.

School of Thought

Dr Ali Black
University of Sunshine Coast

RESILIENCE is something we all need. It is especially important for children and young people. Developing a sense of hope helps children thrive across all aspects of their lives.

Hope influences children’s positive expectations that they can learn and achieve academic goals. Research suggests that the foundation of hope is set by two years of age and is very closely linked to strong and supportive relationships between parents and children.

Children who have high levels of hope experience trusting supportive environments, including parental support and warm and secure attachment relationships. Having at least one caring and supportive relationship can make all the difference to a child’s capacity for hope. This makes the teacher-child relationship very important too.

One of the leading researchers on hope was Rick Snyder, who found that hopeful thinkers achieve more, and are physically and psychologically healthier than less-hopeful people.

Snyder defined hope as having goals, believing there are a variety of ways we can reach those goals, and believing we can make them happen.

In a range of studies, hope has found to be central to the resilience and mental health of young people. When young people are hopeful they show greater well-being, greater development of healthy behaviors, better academic results, and better results in sports. Hope is also frequently paired with positive and fortunate circumstances into adulthood — like a longer life, health, a large social network, and a happy marriage.

Researchers have developed ways to understand hope such as Hope Theory and the Children’s Hope Scale. Children’s answers (yes or no) to these six statements from the Children’s Hope Scale can offer some insights into their hopefulness:

- I think I am doing pretty well
- I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are important to me
- I am doing just as well as other kids my age
- When I have a problem I can come up with lots of ways to solve it
- If I think the things I have done in the past will help me in the future
- I can find ways to solve the problem

Thankfully, hope is a quality we can build into our lives.

Cultivating Hope

- Set goals for what you want to achieve
- Focus on the goals you desire most
- Break your goals into smaller steps
- Surround yourself with hopeful people
- Recognise there are many different ways to arrive at your goals
- Ask friends for advice about how they reach goals
- If a goal is hard to attain at the moment, focus on a different one
- If it feels like the road to your goal is a bit challenging, tell yourself this is only temporary and it will get better soon

Q5: Where would you find the Darling Range?

Answer P23