

5 WAYS TO BUILD

H O P E

Even in traumatic times, many people remain hopeful. Hope may help people to maintain good mental health and make better choices.

It goes without saying that this has been a time of stress and anxiety for many of us. But it has also been a time of hope, and hopefulness may be key to maintaining good mental health as life gets back to normal.

While many people continue to feel overwhelmed and stressed, many are also feeling hopeful. Are these people just in denial? No, hope is a very healthy behavior that can, and does, coexist with negative emotions like stress.

In fact, this mix is a mark of resilience and tends to result in people feeling better in the long run.

Hopefulness might offset poor mental health during times of stress, even among those who have suffered health or financial setbacks. Hope makes people less likely to feel depressed, anxious and lonely and more likely to find satisfaction in life. It may also mean you can be more proactive in getting help with health and finances when needed.



FIVE EASY EXERCISES

Be kind to yourself and others

It is so easy to beat yourself up when things get overwhelming – while juggling many balls you may not feel like you’re giving your job or your family enough attention. Or you might feel like you aren’t exercising as much as you should. Or maybe you don’t think your house is clean enough. Whatever it is — let it go. Be as kind and understanding to yourself as you are to your family and friends. Remind yourself that you’re doing the best you can, just like everyone else, and that’s OK.

Have a laugh

Believe it or not, humour has been shown to make people feel more hopeful. Consider ditching the serious reads and post-apocalyptic fiction for something light and funny. Take a break from binge watching political dramas and go for comedy instead. Tell some Dad jokes around the dinner table. (How does a penguin build its house? Igloos it together! Want to hear a joke about construction? I’m still working on it!) Do whatever you can to find a little laughter in a difficult time.

Appreciate the little things

Gratitude is thought to be a key to resilience — the ability to bounce back when something bad happens. At a time when some of our bigger plans are still on hold, it’s more important than ever to bask in small pleasures. Find the things you really enjoy right now and really enjoy them. Maybe it’s music, quiz night, or family dinner. Even in difficult times, it’s possible to look for those moments of pleasure and be grateful. A quick fix: simply grab a pen and write down 10 things you are grateful for.

Do something for others

We know volunteering has a positive impact on overall well-being, but, depending on your circumstances, it may be hard to find ways to volunteer just now. So, think about what you can do to help someone else: can you make masks? Go shopping for an elderly neighbour? Make a charitable donation, or send a gift card to your friend who isn’t working right now? If none of these feel right to you, we have more ideas about [volunteering for busy people](#).

Set small, immediate goals

Setting goals can increase your sense of control as well as your connection to the world, two things that can increase optimism. But make sure your goals are within reach, and not something that’s out of your control or might not come to fruition anytime soon. You’ll feel better about your goals if you focus on something smaller and more immediate. Consider goals like trying a new recipe, or reading a book, or finishing that impossible puzzle. Or choose one of the first four ideas in this article and make that your goal for the next week.

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