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How to Feel More Hopeful

How's your hope holding up these days? If you're struggling to feel hopeful you're not alone. There's a lot going on in the world and in our nation that is upsetting and discouraging. Perhaps you have personal issues that are weighing you down – financial pressures, job woes, a medical condition, an aging body that doesn't function like it used to, a worrisome family situation, a broken relationship. The possibilities are endless.

Sometimes there are things we can do to improve the situation and, if so, it's good to do that. We can plan and take the steps to achieve it. Sometimes, knowing we can't change anyone but ourselves, what's needed is to change our behavior or our attitude about the situation. Soul searching and prayer are helpful!

Sometimes there's nothing we can do to fix or change the thing that is deeply affecting us. That's when it's tempting to feel overwhelmed or hopeless. In that case, as people of faith, the first thing we can do is lament – pour out our heart to God as honestly as we can. Doing so might involve rage or tears – that's okay. God wants to hear it and certainly can take it.

Clinical Psychologist Charlotte Van Oyen Witvliet developed a research-based practice to help us feel more hopeful, motivated, and grounded in gratitude even when the outcome is uncertain.

“The Practice:

Write about something you deeply hope will happen, but can't fully control.

Reflect on how important this hope is to you and how motivated you are to pursue it.

Recall a past hope that once felt uncertain but eventually came true.

Write about what you're grateful for from that experience, including who helped and what you learned.

Connect what you learned then to what you're hoping for now.

End by naming one small action you can take today toward your current hope."^[1]

I've used this practice and it helped me feel more hopeful about a seemingly hopeless relationship situation. I've done all I can on my end to try to resolve it so, what I do now is pray – for the other person, for myself, for wisdom, for patience. As a person of faith, after doing this exercise, the bottom line I arrived at is this: I am trusting that God is working together for good even when I don't see it or feel it.

~Written by Rev. Margie Osborn

[1] The Science of Happiness, June 19, 2025, greatergood.berkeley.edu

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