

“Hope is not blind optimism. It's not ignoring the enormity of the task ahead or the roadblocks that stand in our path. It's not sitting on the sidelines or shirking from a fight. Hope is that thing inside us that insists, despite all evidence to the contrary, that something better awaits us if we have the courage to reach for it, and to work for it, and to fight for it. Hope is the belief that destiny will not be written for us, but by us, by the men and women who are not content to settle for the world as it is, who have the courage to remake the world as it should be.”

— Barack Obama

“TO BE HOPEFUL in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness.

What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places—and there are so many—where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction.

And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.”

— Howard Zinn

“Write it on your heart
that every day is the best day in the year.
He is rich who owns the day, and no one owns the day
who allows it to be invaded with fret and anxiety.

Finish every day and be done with it.
You have done what you could.
Some blunders and absurdities, no doubt crept in.
Forget them as soon as you can, tomorrow is a new day;
begin it well and serenely, with too high a spirit
to be cumbered with your old nonsense.

This new day is too dear,
with its hopes and invitations,
to waste a moment on the yesterdays.”

— Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Collected Poems and Translations*

It is like any other agriculture: if you hoe it and harrow it and water it enough, you can make three blades of it grow where none grew before. If you've got nothing to plant, the process is slow and difficult, but if you've got a seed of some kind or other--any kind will answer--you get along a good deal faster.

- "Three Thousand Years Among the Microbes"

.it is a blessed provision of nature that at times like these, as soon as a man's mercury has got down to a certain point there comes a revulsion, and he rallies. Hope springs up, and cheerfulness along with it, and then he is in good shape to do something for himself, if anything can be done.

- *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*

The opposite of hope is not hopelessness. Hopelessness is a vacuum. Something else will fill it. It's cynicism, Bitterness and fear. These three inoculates a person against the infection of hope.

Become a student of hope. Hope is contagious. We catch it from those around us.

http://www.bhevolution.org/public/cultivating_hope.page

I was shocked to discover that hope is not an emotion; it's a way of thinking or a cognitive process. Emotions play a supporting role, but hope is really a thought process made up of what Snyder calls a trilogy of goals, pathways, and agency.² In very simple terms, hope happens when

- We have the ability to set realistic goals (I know where I want to go).
- We are able to figure out how to achieve those goals, including the ability to stay flexible and develop alternative routes (I know how to get there, I'm persistent, and I can tolerate disappointment and try again).
- We believe in ourselves (I can do this!).

<http://www.creativegrowth.org/news/great-big-story-shares-story-creative-growth/>

<http://projecthopeexchange.com/>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/pieces-mind/201504/finding-hope>

Neuroscientists are investigating **the science of hope**. It turns out that a feeling of hopefulness changes your brain. Your brain pumps chemicals when experiencing the sensation of hope. These chemicals can block pain and accelerate healing.

Hope, which involves belief and expectation, causes the brain to release neurochemicals called endorphins and enkephalins which actually mimic the effects of morphine. The result is that the brain can overcome hurdles and move to a place of recovery. In scientific terms, hope and recovery are not causally connected, but they are correlated.

Hope differs from positive thinking. Positive thinking is passive. Genuine hope requires action and knowledge. No one explains this concept better than Jerry Groopman, MD, in his ground-breaking book, *The Anatomy of Hope*:

“Hope differs from optimism. Hope does not arise from being told to ‘think positively,’ or from hearing an overly rosy forecast. Hope, unlike optimism, is rooted in unalloyed reality. Hope is the elevating feeling we experience when we see – in the mind’s eye – a path to a better future. Hope acknowledges the significant obstacles and deep pitfalls along the path. True hope has no room for delusion.

Clear-eyed, hope gives the courage to confront our circumstances and the capacity to surmount them. For all my patients, hope, true hope, has proved as important as any medication I might prescribe or any procedure I might perform.

Hope can arrive only when we recognize that there are real options and that you have genuine choices. Hope can flourish only when you believe that what you do can make a difference, that your actions can bring a future different from the present. To have hope then, is to acquire a belief in your ability to have some control over your circumstances. You are no longer entirely at the mercy of forces outside yourself.”

Hope: It's a noun but it's really a verb.

Here are some questions I'm asking myself...

and the congregation.

How does one 'do' hope?

Where can hope be found?

And how is hope best...hoped?

We live in days, like many other days, when hope and feel, can seem somewhere between thin and non-existent. Those are not unreal negative conclusions.

Another school shooting. Many of us expected it. But in the local paper the article appeared below the fold. THAT feels hopeless.

So when the theme of this Sunday turned it's attention to Hope I began asking myself question...what is hope?

As Anne and I talked about the topic we started to focus on the observation that hope, though it's a noun, is actually lived out in the world as a verb. Hope has action, and engages and pushes forward.

There are those, perhaps some here who accept this is the worst of all possible worlds.

That the best way to live life is expect nothing, or the worst, and if something positive happens you have the pleasure of being surprised.

I don't know how you all feel but for a group of Unitarians hopelessness is unappealing and none of you wear it well.

(Before I go farther I need to qualify the issue of depression, fueled by physiological medical issues from attitudes of hopelessness. Seek and maintain medical attention if that's your life condition. It's serious and should be treated that way)

Turns out, however, that hope actually has a science.

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Hope, it seems, is as necessary as sleep, food and meaningful relationships.

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The core of the direction of this message is being driven by a quote from Howard Zinn. **Howard Zinn** (August 24, 1922 – January 27, 2010) was an American [historian](#), playwright, and [social activist](#). He was chair of the history and social sciences department at Spelman College,^[1] and a [political science](#) professor at [Boston University](#). Zinn wrote more than twenty books, including his best-selling and influential [A People's History of the United States](#). In 2007,

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And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.”

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Hope, suggests Zinn is based on a fact. The fact that human history is not only cruel, but also a history of compassion, sacrifice, courage and kindness.

In a moment I want to turn our attention to that last word. But history offers us in the midst of brutal cruelty Schlender, **Giorgio Perlasca**, **Ángel Sanz Briz**, **Giovanni Palatucci**, **Irena Sendler**, **Charles Coward** and many others who saved the lives of countless Jews and “undesirables” of the Holocaust.

To Harriet Tubman we can add names like William Still, John Brown, Lucretia and James Mott and hundreds of un-named, unknown countless kindnesses during and after slavery.

And every conflict and atrocity is ringed with the names and conviction of justice and kindness.

Perhaps some of you remember the words of Fred Roberts whose mother told him in response to seeing tragedy on TV ‘always look for the helpers. When you see the helpers you know there’s hope’.

So...how do we hope?

Remember Zinn's insight about history..." **history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness.**"

Turns out kindness engenders hope in a person.

Let me introduce you to Orly Waha. She is young woman who entered the teaching field to make a difference in the lives of middle school students.

Her TEDtalk is embeded in my mauscript.

<https://www.google.com/search?q=tal+talk+-+kindness+-+orly+waha&aq>

As she sought to make a difference in the lives of her students she continued to run into their attitude of hopelessness. One day she decided to has one of her students to simply do an single act of kindness....speak to the custodian and thank that person for what they do.

That one act started a roll. The student was shocked how she felt about making someone else feel just a bit better. And Orly gave her another card with a act of kindness on it. And gave a few other students kindness cards....and a few others....who wanted to share their kindness cards with friends...

Kindness, it's now being shown, also has its own science. An act of kindness has been shown to produce serotonin, oxytocin, and endorphins. And also serotonin is shown to be produced in the giver, the receiver and any who witness that act of kindness.

There are, apparently a whole host of positive things that come from a simple act of kindness.

Orly's insight has become 'Life Vest Inside'.

<http://www.lifevestinside.com/about-us/mission/>

Now this project is in 120 countries, has been featured on CBS, Bloomberg, and the Today Show. AND you can order sets of kindness cards for yourself or to give away.

I'm tell you about this person and this site not just to that you find it...but so that you know the FACT that hope is happening out there.

Zinn said "there are so many—where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction.

Whether liberating slaves, hiding Jews, or sharing an act of kindness...IT'S OUT THERE AND IT'S HAPPENING!!!!

Connected to that is the Project Hope Exchange and the Adversity to Advocacy Alliance

<http://projecthopeexchange.com/about/>

the world's largest online collection of Messages of Hope—30-second audio messages of encouragement *from* adversity survivors *to* others facing adversities similar to their own.

On that site you can learn about the story of Jessica White, who began making custom hospital gowns for sick children after her own daughter had an extended hospital stay, and went on to found Gracie's Gowns.

and....the story of Randy Taran, who is using her background as a filmmaker to bring young people together and teach them the tools for lasting happiness. Randy produced the award winning film "Project Happiness" and is the founder and CEO of the Project Happiness organization.

and... Brittany Schiavone and her work to celebrate the arrival of babies with Down syndrome through "Brittany's Baskets of Hope."

and...Thistle Farms founder Becca Stevens and her work to help women escape lives on the streets.

and...combat veteran and double amputee Dan Berschinski
To learn more about the Amputee Coalition,

and... Girls with Guts founder Jackie Zimmerman and her work to empower women with Inflammatory Bowel Disease.

and...WaterAid America CEO Sarina Prabasi and her work to help everyone in the world have access to clean water and sanitation.

and...spinal cord injury survivor and advocate Arthur Renowitzky.
To learn more about Arthur's nonprofit foundation, Life Goes On

and...seven-time Paralympic medalist Dr. Cheri Blauwet and her efforts to makes sports accessible to everyone.

and...bipolar disorder survivor and advocate George Petrides creator of Bipolar Perspectives

and...Taylor Duncan, founder of the Alternative Baseball Organization and his efforts to help teens and adults with autism and special needs.

and...comedian Nina G and her efforts to raise awareness about stuttering and learning disabilities.

and...Shatterproof founder Gary Mendell and his work to help end the devastation that addiction causes families.

and...Charlotte Maya and her work to help others who've lost a loved one to suicide.

and...Kelly Gallagher and her efforts to support new parents of premature babies.

and...Sarri Singer and her journey from terrorism survivor to founder of Strength to Strength

and...dance instructor Kim Smith and the "A Chance to Dance" program she created for kids with special needs

and.. Kim Campbell — wife of legendary country singer Glen Campbell — and her advocacy in the Alzheimer's community.

And that's only a sampling.

If you are a person who insists on remaining hopeless you are choosing to do so in the face of all evidence to the contrary.

This world is full of hope. It's not as Barack Obama said 'Blind optimism'.

Zinn went on to finish... "And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory."

I have just offered you a parade of people who have chosen to act. To act based on kindness and the hope it produces.

Hope is real, it's alive and living in this room. Do you wish a hopeful life? Here is your introduction.

NOW seize it, hold it to your heart, hold it to your soul, let it warm you, heat you and perhaps set hope aflame in you. Fan it to life with countless acts of kindness you see around you. Join those countless acts of kindness and add to their numbers and perceive hope alive in you.

So concluding....

Become a student of hope, learn who and where hope is alive. Invest yourself there, live there, emotionally move in there.

I have offered you, me, us an introductory lesson. Now let's open the book. It's there in our history, it's here in our present and will live in our future.

Go...go...go now!