

The Power of Hope and Optimism



We have all heard the phrase “April showers bring May flowers.” While most of us are certainly ready for flowers by the time May arrives, this phrase also has a deeper meaning. It is a reminder that unpleasant things can bring about positive outcomes. This phrase also encourages us to maintain an optimistic attitude and a sense of hope.

Hope and optimism are similar but distinct concepts. Both are positively correlated to health and resilience, but while hope is more directly related to personal belief, optimism is more directly connected to expectations.

- **Hope:** Hope typically refers to a feeling often connected to motivation. A hopeful individual is more likely to believe they have the power to reach their goals. Hope is the belief that your future will be better than the present and that you have the ability to make it happen. It involves both optimism and a can-do attitude.
- **Optimism:** Optimism refers to a person’s expectations for the future. It is a tendency to look on the more favorable side of events or conditions and to expect the most favorable outcome. When someone is optimistic, they are likely to believe that what they hope for will eventually come to pass.

Although hope and optimism are two different things, one isn't nearly as beneficial without the other. Optimism is a mental attitude that heavily influences physical and mental health, as well as coping with everyday social and working life. Optimism can also promote a sense of well-being during difficult times. Likewise, while hope certainly involves our emotions, hope itself is not an emotion. Hope is a way of thinking or a state of being that is more directly connected to goals and personal motivation. People with higher levels of optimism and hope have been found to be better at withstanding uncertainty and have less fear of the unknown. They cope and adapt better in challenging or stressful times and tend to be more personally resilient.

If you are trying to cultivate more optimism and hope in your life, know that this goal is possible. Working with a compassionate and trained counselor or therapist can help you develop the skills you need to foster an optimistic and hopeful perspective while developing your coping skills and resilience.

References:

<https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/psychpedia/optimism>
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-science-behind-behavior/201702/whats-the-difference-between-optimism-and-hope>
<https://psychcentral.com/blog/the-psychology-of-hope#what-is-hope>

<https://www.dhs.gov/employee-resources/news/2023/01/18/optimism-and-its-impact-mental-health>
<https://www.kansashealthsystem.com/health-resources/turning-point/programs/resilience-toolbox/hope-and-optimism/difference-between-hope-and-optimism>

If you would like assistance or support in cultivating hope and optimism in your life, please contact the Aurora EAP.

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Prioritizing Mental Well-being in the Summer

While many people look forward to the warmer temperatures and the longer days of summer, studies show that extended periods in the heat can cause sluggishness, sleeplessness and dehydration all of which can lead to increased anxiety and aggressive behaviors. The Mental Health First Aid Curriculum identifies 8 areas of well-being and offers the following tips to attend to every aspect of your mental well-being as the weather warms up.

1. **Emotional** – Emotional well-being can be achieved by practicing self-care and coping skills. This summer, that may mean that you work to set healthy boundaries, so you don't over commit or, practice deep breathing and mindfulness exercises.
2. **Environmental** – Safe environments lead to well-being. Therefore, it is important to choose people and places that bring you peace and make you feel safe and happy. Making healthy choices in this area will lessen your stress and anxiety.
3. **Financial** – Having a clear sense of your financial picture both current and future, will give you a sense of how much you can splurge on vacations and other outings. Making a plan to put a little money away will allow you to still have fun, but to do so without added stress.
4. **Intellectual** – Keeping your mind sharp and your children's minds sharp can be easy to do in summer. Taking trips to the zoo or museum, learning a new hobby or working on an outdoor project together can be a fun way to keep your mind engaged and bring the whole family together at the same time.
5. **Occupational** – Occupational well-being can come from one's job, but it can also come from volunteering or giving back in some way. This is another great opportunity to do something together as a family and at the same time do something meaningful for those around you.
6. **Physical** – Exercise benefits both your physical and emotional well-being. It's important to find an exercise that you enjoy and will do on a regular basis. Taking a walk or a bike ride can be relaxing, educational and exercise all at the same time.
7. **Social** – Summer can be a great time to reconnect with friends or to make new ones. Volunteering or participating in neighborhood or community events can be opportunities to help your community and meet others with similar interests.
8. **Spiritual**- Participating in activities that bring meaning and a sense of purpose to your life can bring you spiritual well-being. Practicing gratitude and giving of yourself to those less fortunate are just a couple of ways to experience spiritual well-being.

While summer can come with its own set of challenges, being proactive and prepared can allow you to enjoy the summer months and nurture your well-being at the same time.

**If you would like assistance with your mental well-being,
please contact the Aurora EAP.**

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Resources: [Stress hormones spike as the temperature rises | ScienceDaily](#)

[Mental Health First Aid](#) (June 21, 2022)

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Mental Health and the Elderly

Mental health among the elderly is an important and often overlooked issue. As people age, they may face a variety of challenges that can impact their mental well-being. Some common mental health concerns among the elderly include depression, anxiety, cognitive decline, and loneliness. We know that prevention, early intervention, and support are key in combating some of these concerns. Below are some ways you can help.



Encourage Social Connections.

Loneliness and isolation can contribute to mental health issues in the elderly. Encourage seniors to stay connected to friends, family, and community groups.



Promote Physical Activity.

Regular exercise has been shown to improve mood and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. Encourage older adults to engage in activities they enjoy such as walking, gardening or yoga.



Monitor for signs of mental health issues.

Be attentive to changes in mood, behavior or daily routines that could indicate a mental health concern. Encourage conversation with doctor or counselor for your loved one.



Seek professional help when needed.

If you notice persistent signs of depression, anxiety, or other mental health concerns, this could be a sign of an underlying mental health issue or medical condition.



Provide a supportive environment.

Create a nurturing environment where the individual feels safe, heard, and respected. Encourage positive coping strategies, self-care practices and healthy lifestyle choices to provide overall mental well-being.

If you or a household family member need assistance, please reach out to the Aurora EAP at 800.236.3231 or visit www.aurora.org/eap

Resources: [Older Adults and Mental Health - National Institute of Mental Health \(NIMH\) \(nih.gov\)](#),
[The State of Mental Health and Aging in America \(cdc.gov\)](#)



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