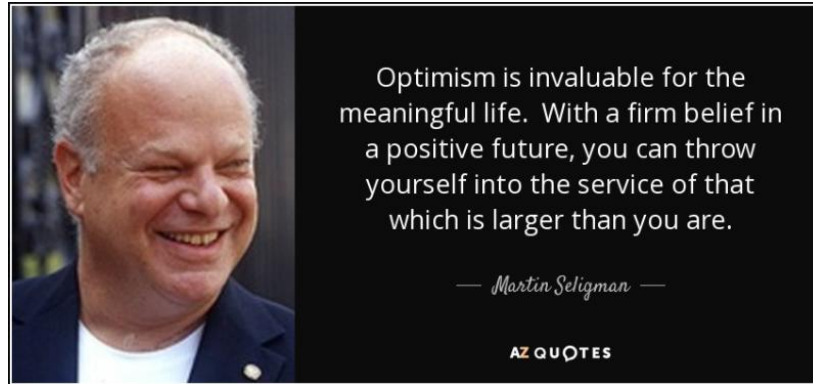


Chapter 5 | Lesson on Belief and Hope



We need hope as much as we need light in the darkest night.

We need hope as much as we need air to stay alive.

Therefore, choose to believe in hope. As long as there is hope, everything is possible:

- Hope drives away fear and anxiety.
- Hope rises above despair and depression.
- Hope overcomes all obstacles and enemies.
- Hope enables you to endure hardships and pain.
- Hope opens your eyes to discover that there is something in life that is worth fighting for.
- Hope awakens your soul to see the beauty, goodness and truth in cruel world.
- Hope always says Yes to life and No to death.

Science has shown that optimism is the most powerful motivation for us to move forward and maintain our mental health.

The important role of hope in maintaining one's wellbeing and health has been well documented (Snyder, 2000). It is difficult to conceive how we can maintain hope and confidence in the face of bleak prospects without faith, be it religious faith, trust in others, or self-confidence. In short, one cannot survive without faith or belief.

Once you lose faith in yourself or in humanity, you will be overwhelmed by waves of hopelessness and helplessness, which will make you more vulnerable to depression or suicide. Faith enables you to attempt the impossible and take the first step to embark on a long and dangerous journey. A person of faith is a person of unshakable confidence and unwavering determination. .

Tolstoy wrote: "Faith is the sense of life, that sense by virtue of which man does not destroy himself, but continues to live on. It is the force whereby we live." Therefore, do not lose faith in your own agency, in humanity, or in God. As long as you keep the faith and believe in hope, you will be unstoppable. Yes, everything is possible with faith and hope.

We need all kinds of hope to fully benefit from its power.

Please complete the following *Hope Checklist* with a Yes or No answer and briefly write down the reason for your answer:

Hope Checklist

- | | |
|--|----------|
| 1. I believe in God and prayer. | Yes / No |
| 2. I have confidence in science. | Yes / No |
| 3. I have trust in the help from others. | Yes / No |
| 4. I have confidence in my own efficacy. | Yes / No |
| 5. I believe that good will prevail over evil. | Yes / No |
| 6. I believe that there is light at the end of the tunnel, only if I persevere. | Yes / No |
| 7. I believe that I can always improve myself and become my best. | Yes / No |
| 8. I believe that I will achieve a breakthrough if I don't give up. | Yes / No |
| 9. I believe that life is meaningful no matter how difficult the circumstances. | Yes / No |
| 10. I believe that love can conquer everything, if I am not afraid of sacrifice. | Yes / No |
| 11. I believe in karma and the merit of doing good. | Yes / No |
| 12. I believe in the legacy of my ancestors. | Yes / No |
| 13. I believe that there is power in being united around a good cause or fighting together against a common enemy. | Yes / No |
| 14. I believe that kindness, forgiveness, and gratitude could strengthen human relations. | Yes / No |
| 15. I believe in the wisdom of nature. We can survive if we follow nature's way. | Yes / No |
| 16. I believe that my government can make life better collectively. | Yes / No |
| 17. I believe in social responsibility and communal efforts. | Yes / No |
| 18. I believe in a better future. | Yes / No |

The Life Attitudes Scale

Leung, M., Steinfort, T., Vroon, E. J., & Wong, P. T. P. (2002)

Please indicate the degree which each item reflects your attitude toward life.

(Note: In order to maintain the integrity of the study *all questions must be answered* in order to save your results.)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1 When times get really tough, someone or something will come through for me	SA	A	D	SD
2 In times of crisis, I tend to consider the needs of others before I consider my own needs	SA	A	D	SD
3 Faith in a higher power makes it easier to endure pain	SA	A	D	SD
4 In times of great tragedy, the opportunity to sacrifice myself for the common good makes my pain more bearable	SA	A	D	SD
5 I have faith that eventually justice will prevail, even though at times it seems hopeless	SA	A	D	SD
6 I will pursue my life goals no matter how much they will cost me	SA	A	D	SD
7 There is a dark and evil side to every person	SA	A	D	SD
8 I believe in a higher power	SA	A	D	SD
9 Life is full of setbacks	SA	A	D	SD
10 Putting my fate in God's hands has helped me gain peace in my life	SA	A	D	SD
11 Being an example to others motivates me to endure hardships	SA	A	D	SD
12 Living for others helps me rise above my own problems	SA	A	D	SD
13 It is inevitable that people will let me down	SA	A	D	SD
14 Even though reality is grim, I believe a miracle could happen	SA	A	D	SD
15 My life has purpose because I have a unique calling or mission	SA	A	D	SD
16 I can endure great suffering in this life because I know my reward will be great in the next life	SA	A	D	SD

17	We will never get rid of war, terrorism, or tragedy	SA	A	D	SD
18	My life is worth living no matter how many problems I have	SA	A	D	SD
19	My suffering decreases whenever I reach out to help others	SA	A	D	SD
20	I can move forward with confidence, even if most people don't approve of my life goals	SA	A	D	SD
21	I want to contribute to the well-being of others in spite of my own unfortunate circumstances	SA	A	D	SD
22	My life is fragile, and could end at any time	SA	A	D	SD
23	Even when I am at the end of my rope, I still believe that God will come to my rescue	SA	A	D	SD
24	Even if I were stripped of everything, I still believe that my life is precious	SA	A	D	SD
25	In times of tragedy, I am willing to sacrifice my own safety for the safety of others	SA	A	D	SD
26	Life has intrinsic value, regardless of circumstances	SA	A	D	SD
27	Life is worth living no matter how difficult or painful it is	SA	A	D	SD
28	I'd rather die fighting for something I believe in than play safe	SA	A	D	SD
29	Even though this life is very painful, I believe there is a better life beyond this one	SA	A	D	SD
30	I am willing to face horrible consequences in order to do what is right	SA	A	D	SD
31	I have been put on this earth for a reason	SA	A	D	SD
32	I find satisfaction in helping others, even in the midst of my own suffering	SA	A	D	SD

Note: The Life attitudes scale is called *Life Attitude Scale* during administration.

For the scoring key, please refer to the "Measures and Scales Scoring Keys" section.

Faith Checklist

Faith means the belief in something or someone without all the information and evidence. It means the decision to believe in spite of some doubts.

Please check **Yes** or **No** for the following statements.

Check Yes even if your agreement is **less than 100% but more than 60%**

- 1) I have faith in my efficacy to get things done and achieve my goals. Yes/No
- 2) I believe in my potential to grow and become a better person. Yes/No
- 3) I have faith in a better future, if I do not give up. Yes/No
- 4) I have faith in the essential goodness of people. Yes/No
- 5) I believe in an orderly universe. Yes/No
- 6) I believe that life is worth living in spite of suffering. Yes/No
- 7) I believe that there is a God or higher power. Yes/No
- 8) I have faith in the intrinsic value of pursuing truth, beauty and goodness. Yes/No
- 9) I believe in second chances and the possibility of redemption. Yes/No
- 10) I have faith in the value of my mission in life. Yes/No

If you cannot affirm most of the above statements, you may have difficulties overcoming whatever problem you are facing.

Viktor Frankl, the Prophet of Hope

Viktor Frankl, one of the most influential psychotherapists of the last century, continues to appeal to the new generation. His prophetic voice still relevant in the age of COVID-19.

The horror of Nazi death camps allowed Viktor Frankl (1985) to discover the power of tragic optimism (TO). He defined TO as “an optimism in the face of tragedy” (p.162). He made a compelling case that we can ‘say yes to life’ in spite of all the tragic aspects of human existence.

After surviving the Holocaust, Frankl (1985) eloquently discussed the critical nature of attitude toward suffering. He would not endorse positive illusions or Pollyanarish optimism. To him, an optimistic attitude was literally a defiant stance to be embraced in the face of terror:

“He may retain his human dignity even in a concentration camp. Dostoevsky said once ‘There is one thing that I dread: not to be worthy of my sufferings.’ These words frequently came to my mind after I became acquainted with those martyrs whose behavior in camp, whose suffering and death, bore witness to the fact that the last inner freedom cannot be lost. It can be said that they were worthy of their sufferings; the way they bore their suffering was a genuine inner achievement. It is this spiritual freedom – which can not be taken away – that makes life meaningful and purposeful.” (Frankl, 1985, p. 87)

I consider Frankl as a prophet of hope. The following passages from my chapter on Frankl (Wong, 2007) explains how TO is important for resilience and mature happiness:

"Unlike other kinds of hopes, TO cannot be crushed by adversities or catastrophes, because like true gold, it is purified in the crucible of suffering and rooted in an abiding inner value. Frankl (1985) aptly added: “The consciousness of one’s inner value is anchored in higher, more spiritual things, and cannot be shaken by camp life” (p. 83).

Components of Tragic Optimism

Based on Frankl’s writings, I have identified five essential components that comprise TO: (a) Affirmation of the meaning and value of life, regardless of circumstances, (b) Acceptance of what cannot be changed, (c) Self-transcendence in serving a higher purpose, (d) Faith or trust in God and others, (e) Courage to face adversity. These components can also be found in the clinical literature on trauma as well as the larger literature of humanities.

Gabriel Marcel once said that “The only genuine hope is hope in what does not depend on ourselves, hope springing from humility and not from pride.” Frankl has personally demonstrated that we can restore hope in hopeless situations through surrendering to the calling of meaning.

I have defined and refined the components of TO and demonstrated empirically the dialectic/paradoxical nature of TO: In our state of despair and helplessness, we discover the

power of meaning and faith; in our brokenness, we hear the calling to bring healing to others; in our suffering, we encounter joy and serenity; and in our fears and vulnerability, we discover the defiant, heroic courage.

The theory and research on tragic optimism answer many of the issues raised by Peterson (2000) and suggest a new direction for optimism research as well as for positive psychology. TO is in the vanguard of developing a mature positive psychology for all humanity, including the millions who are suffering and dying each day.

Future directions in TO research should include implementing TO in developing countries (Wong, 2003), studying the defiant human spirit and courage (Wong, 1995), and applying TO in working with trauma victims and dying patients.

Since TO serves as a prototype of mature positive psychology for the suffering masses, it warrants a closer look at the contribution of tragic optimism to mature happiness and personal growth in the midst of adversities and traumas."