

Nurturing Hope with a Hope Box

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted everyone's sense of stability, structure, and sense of control. This prolonged time of uncertainty, combined with the social distancing that keeps us away from family, friends, and normal activities, has taken a significant psychic toll.

However, there is hope for the new year, and this worksheet can help you nurture it. Hope is always important in our lives, but now it is more critical than ever. Hope can help you fight off depression. Hope can motivate you to achieve your goals. Hope can help you be more resilient. Hope can help you focus on the reality that you need to keep yourself safe by taking the health precautions recommended by the CDC and your state and local government.

Here's What to Do

Take a shoe box or any similar-sized box and write the words Hope Box somewhere on the top. Every day find something to put in your Hope Box. Put in objects that are associated with positive feelings and memories. Put in words that inspire you and make you think of a brighter future. Here are some suggestions of things to put in your Hope Box. Check off the ones that you think might be most useful.

- A special letter, card, or printed email from someone you care about.
- Special pictures that bring up positive memories (family, friends, vacations, etc.).
- Success documents (report card, diploma, certificates, awards, etc.).
- Special quotations that are important to you.
- Art that you have created or that someone has made for you.
- Objects from your life that are associated with good memories.
- Letters or printed emails that mean a lot to you.
- Photos of special times you have had – or of special times you hope to have, such as photos of a vacation spot or an activity you enjoy doing.
- Photos of loved ones.
- Souvenirs from past trips or vacations.
- Meaningful photos from magazines or newspapers.

Write down other things you might put in your Hope Box:

This technique will only be helpful if you do it every day and spend some time thinking about hope. The essence of hope is that you *believe* you will be able to have a better future. The strength of that belief is largely based on your ability to create that future by solving the problems that are currently weighing you down. While some people seem to be better problem solvers than others, the truth is that everyone solves big and small problems every day. Answer the following questions to think about how you can solve the problems that are affecting you during the pandemic.

Describe the one problem that when solved will make the biggest difference in your life.

Problems are best solved one small step at a time. Write down six or more steps you can take to find a solution for this problem.

It is important to make a plan, or a roadmap, to solve your problem. However, every plan has some obstacles. List some obstacles you might encounter as you solve your problem.

Sometimes you might have a mental block in seeing the best steps to take in solving a problem. In this case, other viewpoints can help. Name three people who can give you other viewpoints in solving this problem.

How do you know when you have solved your problem? What will be different in your life?

A Virtual Hope Box (VHB) is available from the Apple App store, developed by the National Center for Telehealth and Technology. People can use the VHB to store a variety of rich multimedia content they find personally supportive in times of need. For example, you can include photos, videos and recorded messages from loved ones, inspirational quotes, soothing music, and more. The VHB provides people with positive activity planning, distraction tools, and interactive relaxation exercises including guided imagery, controlled breathing, and muscle relaxation.

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?
