

# WHAT WORD COMES TO YOUR MIND?

Before reading further, look at the four spaces below. Notice what your mind wants to put there. There is no test and no need to get anything right.

What word, image, memory or feeling came to mind first?

Stay with your own response for a moment. What made that particular thought stand out today?

**NOW REVEAL THE WORD**

## HOPE

Hope does not have to mean pretending everything is fine. It can be a small sense that something may change, that support may be possible, or that another way forward could exist.

# WHAT DOES HOPE MEAN TO YOU?

Hope can feel comforting for one person and complicated for another. If you have experienced disappointment, loss, uncertainty or repeated setbacks, being asked to 'stay hopeful' can even feel like pressure. This page makes room for your own meaning.

**When I hear the word hope, I think about...**

**In my body, hope feels like...**

**Hope becomes difficult for me when...**

**Something that helps me reconnect with possibility is...**

## Hope without forced positivity

You can acknowledge pain and still leave room for possibility. Hope is not a demand to be cheerful, ignore risk or deny what has happened. It can simply be the willingness to consider that the next moment, conversation, decision or chapter does not have to be identical to the last.

## Borrowed hope

Sometimes we cannot access hope for ourselves. At those times, it may help to borrow it from a trusted person, a therapeutic relationship, a community, a past experience of surviving something difficult, or a reminder that feelings and circumstances can shift.

# TURNING HOPE INTO SOMETHING SMALL

Hope becomes more usable when it is connected to something concrete. You do not need to know the whole route. Choose one possibility that feels meaningful enough to explore.

**One possibility I would like to leave room for:**

**Why this matters to me:**

**The smallest next step I could take:**

**Who or what could support me with this?**

**If progress is slower than I want, I want to remind myself:**

## A gentle reality check

Ask: Is this step within my influence? Is it small enough for where I am today? Am I measuring progress only by the final outcome? Hope can coexist with uncertainty. The aim is not certainty; it is enough space to choose a next step.

## If hope feels too far away

Return to the present. Notice one thing that feels steady, one need you can respond to today, and one person or service you could contact if you need support. You are not required to manufacture a hopeful feeling before you are ready.

# A MESSAGE FROM MAGGIE

Hope is a word we often use as though everybody experiences it in the same way. We do not. For some people it feels energising; for others it can feel fragile, frightening or difficult to trust.

I do not believe hope has to be loud. Sometimes it is simply getting through today. Sometimes it is allowing somebody to help. Sometimes it is wondering whether life could feel different even when you cannot yet picture how.

You do not have to dismiss what hurts in order to make room for hope. Both can exist together. Your difficult experiences deserve to be acknowledged, and so do the parts of you that are still looking for possibility.

If this exercise gives you one small opening - a thought, a conversation, a boundary, a question or a next step - that is enough.

**Maggie Learoyd MNCPS - Space to Breathe Therapy**

## THERAPEUTIC CONTEXT & FURTHER READING

Person-centred practice supports people to explore their own meaning rather than being told what they should feel. Positive psychology research has also examined hope as involving goals, possible routes towards them and a sense of agency, while ACT offers a useful way to take values-led action without waiting for difficult thoughts or feelings to disappear.

Suggested reading: Carl R. Rogers, *On Becoming a Person*; C. R. Snyder, *The Psychology of Hope*; Russ Harris, *The Happiness Trap*; Steven C. Hayes, *A Liberated Mind*.

This resource is for reflection and psychoeducation. It is not a diagnostic tool or a substitute for individual medical or mental-health care.