

## **Keeping Hope Alive in Difficult Times**

We can probably all agree that 2020 is a year to put behind us. How do our expectations for 2021 stack up against what's going on in the world today? Usually we enthusiastically lean toward each coming New Year with wishes for happiness, prosperity, good health, and perhaps even meaningful personal growth and major life changes. Yet, people are still getting sick, natural disasters are occurring around the world, people are losing jobs, businesses are closing, many have lost beloved family and friends. This New Year may not feel as hopeful or provide as much of a sense of relief as we need right now. How does one maintain hope in the face of so much continued uncertainty? Are you concerned about any of your employees? Are there ways you as a supervisor can help employees feel more hopeful in the coming weeks and months? Mental Health America shares in their article, [Maintaining Hope in the Face of Uncertainty](#),

“COVID-19 is more than just a ‘bump in the road’ – this is a challenge that has persisted and will continue for a while. If we try to stick to our old routines and expectations, we’ll continue to feel as though we’re just waiting for time to pass before continuing on with our lives. It can be tough to shake the feeling that this is all temporary, but accepting our new normal and adapting to it is the best way to take back some control when it feels like so many things are up in the air.”

When having a hard time finding hope, here are some things to keep in mind:

- Remind yourself that this isn't forever.
- Look ahead to post-pandemic times.
- Control what you can.
- Turn to faith and spirituality.
- Combat your negative thoughts.
- Make time for fun.
- Keep up with basic self-care.

For the full article, and more resources, check out, [Maintaining Hope in the Face of Uncertainty](#) and [Mental Health America Self-Help Tools](#)

## **Can A Supervisor Make a Difference?**

The need for strong leadership is at an all-time high during these difficult times. People want certainty, and reminders that things will get better. They want hope. In her Harvard Business Review blog titled, [Hope Is a Strategy \(Well, Sort Of\)](#), Deborah Mills-Scofield clearly articulates, “Hope doesn't demarcate a linear path, but it does guide us through twists and turns. Hope views the glass as half full, not half empty. Hope supports realistic optimism, [a necessary component of success](#).” Hope is an emotion, like happiness, which comes and goes. It requires us to decide each day to make choices to sustain its positive impact. Who you associate yourself with and your general state of mind in the workplace are a few things which influence your feelings of happiness and hope. [In Five Ways Leaders Keep Hope Alive](#), Glenn Llopiis, Harvard Business Review contributor offers five ways hope influences positive behavior:

1. Hope Renews Faith: Hope can lead to a new sense of discovering solutions to challenges and problems.
2. Hope Builds Self-Confidence: When we believe that things can and will get better, we tap into our creative thinking and explore new or different ways of approaching challenges.
3. Hope Promotes Empowerment and Clarity: Hope can especially move us during difficult times and increase our sense of happiness. Without it, we risk becoming cynical.

4. Hope Helps Increase Productivity and Underscores a Positive Work Ethic: Hope gives us a perspective to keep moving forward while battling the oftentimes subtle and persistent messages to quit or give up.
5. Hope Instills Family Pride and Togetherness: When we have each other's back, we are all more hopeful.

Mr. Llopis concludes by saying, "So, what is hope? **H**ealthy, **O**ptimism, **P**eople, **E**nable. Don't abuse the power of hope. Only use it if you can truly help people move in a more positive direction, toward healthy optimism and sustainable outcomes." Be cautious that you are not avoiding or minimizing challenges or discomforts. Keep teams connected to the positive personal and occupational benefits of hope.

### **Did you Know that EAO Offers Grief Support?**

It can be very challenging when there is a death that impacts the workplace, and it can be made more complicated during the pandemic. Supervisors are often in the role of leading a team while also possibly grieving themselves. While we often think of workplace grief being the death of an employee or a student, it can also be a non-employed but significant person to a work unit or an employee family member. EAO can help supervisors and managers navigate the grief process within their department, as well as support you if you are experiencing grief in the workplace. Not every employee and department need is the same, and EAO can work with you based on the individual needs of your department. Ways we can help include:

- Provide an initial consultation to discuss the circumstances around the recent loss and create a plan for moving forward.
- Consult on when and how to tell staff
- Help with notification email language
- Provide supportive literature and handouts for you and your staff
- Hold a grief support session for your group
- Consult on changing dynamics in the work unit
- Provide individual counseling to those needed and referral to outside support and resources
- In some circumstances, it can also be helpful to consult on notifying and preparing teams for an anticipated loss

**To learn more or to set up an initial consultation, contact the EAO, 608-263-2987, [eao@mailplus.wisc.edu](mailto:eao@mailplus.wisc.edu)**

### **LifeMatters Resources**

Data continues to reveal the far-reaching emotional toll related to COVID-19. After coping with this pandemic for many months, we are all "COVID weary." LifeMatters is offering supportive sessions at no cost for employees to share their challenges, ask questions and focus on strategies to enhance coping and build resilience. Please feel free to share the invitation with employees within your organization as you deem appropriate. Due to the expected size of this session, participant microphones will be muted. Participant input from the chat feature will guide the facilitator's discussion.

#### **January 14th 12-1p CST: Finding "Silver Linings" and Building Resilience**

As 2020 comes to a close, it's a perfect time to reflect. During some of the biggest challenges our world has ever faced, what about you? What have you discovered about yourself? What "silver linings" might you have uncovered this year? Have you re-prioritized your life, found creative ways to stay physically active or new coping strategies that you'd never tried before? This session will focus on hidden treasures uncovered during COVID-19 and ways to continue to build resilience as we roll into 2021. <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6283803922665250064>

#### **February 10th 12-1pm CST: Parenting in a Pandemic**

Challenges for parents abound in this COVID-19 world. Parents have been thrust into uncharted waters as they try to not only remain valued employees but help navigate their children's education and social and emotional well-being. This session will focus on helping parents more successfully navigate all that is before them.

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5184409942633438736>

**The LifeMatters materials can be found by clicking on the following link:**

[https://www.empathia.com/promos/current\\_wpo\\_complete.php](https://www.empathia.com/promos/current_wpo_complete.php)

This month's promotional content includes:

Flyers:

- Minimizing Your Health Risks
- Seasonal Affective Disorder
- Five Reasons for HR to Contact LifeMatters (for Managers)

Posters:

- Healthy Choices
- Winter Blues
- Cultivating Calm