



September 2021

Hanging On: Anxiety & Hope

Are your days filled with anxiety and fear that often lead to depression and hopelessness? Covid, fires, global warming, hurricanes, health, and the needs of so many across the globe can be overwhelming. Most of you, as my readers, are also caregivers for spouses, parents, other family members or are just concerned with your own aging journey. This issue of my newsletter deals with hope and some concrete action items.

Wikipedia says: **Hope** is an optimistic state of mind that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one's life or the world at large. As a verb, its definitions include: "expect with confidence" and "to cherish a desire with anticipation."



Where might you be on the scale of being “hopeful”? If I asked you to place a number next to your level of hopefulness, would it be a full 10 being the most hopeful? Somewhere in the middle? Or even at the low end at 1, meaning high anxiety, pessimism, and despair. If you are finding yourself at the very low end you will need some professional support. This does not mean you are weak or somewhat impaired. It is just a red flag that it is time for help.

In Christianity you often see an anchor as a symbol for hope; this could be a visual reminder for anyone experiencing despair. In Judaism, the almond blossoms are a symbol of renewal and hope because they bloom in the rainy season. Like affirmations, visual symbols that you can bring to mind quickly bring you back to that place of hope. In the old world, the swallow would be a sign to sailors that the voyage is over and safety is ahead. If one of these images touches you or you have one that you like better, use it to help ground you when you feel anxiety coming on.

Back to my scale – most of us probably hover on that scale between six and nine. One way to increase your level is to work on being prepared for disasters:

- Do you have your 3-day food and water supply?
- Have you downloaded a checklist on what you should have in your to-go bag?
- Have you reviewed and completed all legal tools? The most important is your Advance Health Care Directive.
- Are you and those you love vaccinated against Covid? (See resources for all)



These are the five ways to be more hopeful:

1. Be grateful - Every day either say to yourself what you are grateful for or keep a gratitude journal. The cathartic exercise of writing helps you imprint that blessing in your mind. Remember to say “thank you” every day to people ranging from strangers to family members.
2. Reduce news watching - Many of us are addicted to the news reports that bombard us all day and night. Choose to not watch or listen one or two days a week.
3. Surround yourself with positive people - If you have friends or family that are always negative, reduce your exposure to these people when possible. Find new friends; join groups that work on making the community or world a better place. Focus on the positive impact you and others are making.
4. Pray or meditate - There are many ways to get to a place of peace. Try out an app on your phone that helps you with a guided meditation and do it regularly. This has an impact on both body and brain health.
5. Develop a desire for change that will make an impact and increase hope for others - This can be as simple as donating food to the food bank, taking time to help cleaning up the environment or changing your habits by increasing composting or decreasing your use of plastics. Another option is to work on social and racial justice. When we act, we are part of the change we desire.

Affirmation: “I look to the positives in my life daily.”

Resources:

Advance Health Care Directives: www.Prepareforyourcare.org

Emergency “To Go” bags: <https://www.ready.gov/kit>

Covid Updates:

<https://www.fda.gov/emergency-preparedness-and-response/counterterrorism-and-emergin-g-threats/coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

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925-899-6563