

SUICIDE AWARENESS & PREVENTION

How to *Cultivate* Hope

Hope is a powerful protective factor in mental health. It gives us the strength to keep moving forward—even during tough times. Cultivating hope isn't about ignoring pain or pretending things are okay. It's about believing that healing and positive change are possible.

Hopelessness can leave a person highly vulnerable to self-harm impulses. At times it's common to experience thoughts of self-harm when feeling depressed or stuck. In those moments, it may seem like unhappiness will never end. But it's important to realize: these feelings can change. With help and support, things can get better. You are not alone—and there is always a way forward.

Ways to Cultivate Hope, Build Resilience, and Move Toward Positive Action:

- **Connect with Supportive People:** Surround yourself with friends, family, coworkers, or mentors who listen without judgment. Talking with others can offer perspective, comfort, and renewed strength.
- **Set Realistic Goals:** Establishing achievable goals provides a sense of direction. Break big goals into smaller steps so that every effort leads to progress and builds confidence.
- **Find Purpose:** Reflect on your values and passions. What gives your life meaning? Engage in purposeful activities—even simple ones—as they can create a sense of motivation and fulfillment.
- **Practice Optimism and Gratitude:** Train your mind to notice what's going right. Even on difficult days, identifying one or two things you're grateful for can shift your mindset toward hope.
- **Focus on What You Can Control:** Rather than fixating on what feels overwhelming, take action in areas you can influence—your routines, your responses, or your self-care habits.
- **Practice Self-Compassion:** Be kind to yourself. Everyone makes mistakes or has setbacks. Treat yourself with the same understanding you'd offer a friend going through a hard time.
- **Prioritize Self-Care:** Your well-being matters. Sleep, nutrition, movement, and downtime all affect your ability to cope with stress and see things more clearly.
- **Develop Problem-Solving Skills:** Instead of feeling stuck in problems, practice breaking them down into manageable parts. Brainstorm solutions, ask for input, and take one step at a time.
- **Reach Out for Professional Support:** If you're struggling, don't go through it alone. EAP counselors can help you talk through feelings and offer tools to rebuild hope and clarity.