

Hope as a Verb: Focus on the Future

Laurie E. Fonken, Ph.D., LPC

Objectives

- Define “Hope” as a verb
- Explore the elements of Hope
- Explore the concepts of “calling” and “job”
- Begin to develop a path forward

Introduction

Veterinary medical professionals face many challenges. We are all too familiar with the impact on mental health and wellbeing. It may be hard to envision a better future, especially when most of us are just trying to keep up hour by hour, day by day, with no end in sight. Many have lost touch with the meaning of the work they do as most are just focused on getting the work done. As hard as it may seem to stop this cycle, practicing active hope is a place to begin. Believing the future will be better than the present, conceptualizing and stating a goal, seeing a pathway and possibilities, and trusting we have the power to actualize our goal – even in the midst of obstacles – can offer a way forward.

Defining Hope

Traditional definitions refer to hope as a noun and hopeful, hoping, or hoped as passive verbs. Hope is sometimes thought of as wishful thinking, pondering, dreaming. It is defined as a feeling, a desire, an expectation for a positive outcome. In this presentation, we will use the word HOPE as an active verb. Based on the work of C.J. Snyder and Shane Lopez, hope has three elements: a goal, a pathway, and the agency or ability to move toward the goal. This active definition will be used to help you imagine and create your own future goals, to think of and discover the pathways or specific strategies to reach your goals, and to support you in tapping into your own motivation and abilities to create structures to reach your goals.

The three elements of hope are:

Goal: Hope is built from the goals that matter most to us. Idea of where we want to go and/or be in the future.

Agency: Our perceived ability to make things happen, to share our lives. Includes taking responsibility for where we are, where we are heading, and building our capacity and having the commitment to getting there.

Pathway: Route(s) to attain our goals. The plans, strategies, and resources we need to achieve our goal. Includes planning for obstacles that will arise and finding ways to overcome them.

Hope is a motivational factor that helps initiate and sustain action toward long-term goals. High-hope individuals can see their goals clearly, use past performance as an indicator of future success, and have intrinsic motivation to find way(s) to attain their goals. In addition, hope is moving toward not moving away from. If you are moving toward a specific goal, your attention and effort are focused on attaining that specific outcome. If you are moving away from something, how you get away does not matter. What matters most is that you get away. We

survive when we are able to move away from a negative state. We thrive when we have something positive to move toward.

Calling and Work

When looking at what motivates us as service providers, as veterinary professionals, it is important to understand the terms “calling” and “job.” Many who come to this profession state it is a calling; they knew they wanted to work with animals from a young age. The path was almost set for them. Calling is defined as the perception of personal meaning, dedication, and involvement tied to one’s career. It is who you are. Your work or job is what you do, the tasks, the skills, the activities performed throughout the day. Understanding the difference between these two and identifying what is driving you, both internally and externally, will be helpful in defining the goals you have and how you will achieve them.

Hope in Action

With some insight into the elements of hope and motivation for hope, we can begin to explore a goal:

- What is one goal you hope to achieve in the future?
- Describe your goal in as much detail as possible.
- How much do you desire this goal?
- Describe why you want to achieve the goal. List what is motivating you.
- Imagine you have just achieved your goal. Describe how you think you will feel in this future memory.

Plan & Action: What small actions can you take that will start moving you closer towards this goal?

- List the pathways (actions/strategies) you can use to achieve your goal.
- Describe potential barriers for each pathway you listed.
- Describe a time when you achieved a goal by overcoming barriers. What were the barriers and how did you overcome them?
- Choose the best pathway and describe how you will overcome the barrier.
- What are two or three things that must be accomplished for you to attain your goal?

Agency: Write down 3 short sentences that will help remind you of your capabilities, for instance, “*I am capable and resourceful.*”

- Identify people and/or resources in your community with whom you can rely on as a source of support in pursuing your goal.
- Describe something that motivates you (e.g., music, movie, a person). Think of how you can use this inspiration to help you to pursue your goal.

Reflection

This session will end with a reflective exercise which will encourage participants to consider where they are today, where they would like to be, and how to set a vision for this future goal.

References and Resources

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