

Activities to Help Kids Have Hope and Change Their Lives

*If your children are struggling, you can help by doing these **hope activities for kids**. They will go a long way in teaching them to cope when times are tough.*

He was afraid. She knew it, but no matter what she said, it didn't seem to really help. She would tell him it will be alright. She would say, I'm here, you don't need to be afraid. She would hold him and tell him everything would be fine.

Yes, he would cry at the drop of a hat, act out and do things that were not in his nature to do. Thankfully, after we spoke, she realized he was struggling in a deep way and it was because the fears he had about what was happening were completely overwhelming him.

I suggested that sometimes words are not enough.

Hope Activities

Sometimes we need to do active things that will make our children feel better in the moment and at the same time teach them to cope throughout their lives.

We need to show them examples and help them learn that yes, these feelings are real, they are normal and it is certainly alright to have them.

We also need to let them know that there is hope. We need to show them, not just tell them, what that actually means.

Hope is essential to our lives.

When kids are overwhelmed or afraid due to things going on in the world, or in their lives, focusing their attention on hope can help them to cope and thrive.

Before we dive into the types of things you can do with your kids to foster hope, let's take a look at what hope is.

What Hope Is

Hope is often defined as *the expectation that something will happen*.

While that is true, I like to think of it more like this:

"Hope is the belief that circumstances will get better. It's not a wish for things to get better — it's the actual belief, the knowledge that things will get better, no matter how big or small." ([Psychology Today](#))

Hope is a belief.

It is what we hang on to when things are not going the way we expected or when times are tough.

It gets us through.

It gives us that glimmer that we simply can't ignore.

It sparks a feeling in us.

It speaks to us and lets us know we shouldn't give up because change can and will happen.

If we keep going.

If we look to the future.

If we simply have hope.

Her son, and all of our kids, need to learn how having hope can help them thrive.

Research has shown that "hope is associated with many positive outcomes, including greater happiness, better academic achievement and even lowered risk of death." ([American Psychological Association](#))

If you think about it, it make perfect sense. If you have hope, you can see a different future.

You can see beyond problems to possible solutions whereas those with no hope would simply give up.

One of the most important things we can do for our kids is help them to cultivate that hope.

We need to give them opportunities to have optimism and to look for ways to keep their spirits up, to be resilient when things around them are not going the way they expected.

This is particularly important when times are tough and things are out of their control.

Help them learn to be more hopeful and look to the future by doing these activities with them. It worked for her son, and it can work for your children as well.

Hope Activities

Here is a group of activities that will help kids. At the end of each activity is a blue box telling you how this will help them.

Let's teach them and let them move past fear to a place where they can learn to see a better outcome.

Grow

Grow something. This simple activity has a lot of impact.

Order some seeds and plant them.

Watch the seeds sprout and grow. Then let them care for the plants.

Your best bet is to start with planting seeds that sprout fast so kids can see them come up quickly.

Cosmos, marigolds, zinnia and sunflowers are all good choices for fast growing plants.

I found this [Paint and Plant Flower Growing Kit](#) which includes everything your kids need (including soil!) to grow cosmos, zinnia and marigolds. They even get to decorate the neat container.

Or, do like I did and order seeds from some of my favorite companies: Johnny's Selected Seeds, White Flower Farm and Seed Savers Exchange. You can also get them from your greenhouse if you like to buy local.

There is nothing like nurturing a new plant coming up out of the soil to teach about hope. It lets children learn about growth and while this concept may be a bit large for them right now, it is something they will understand as they, themselves, grow in their personal lives. This activity also teaches them that sometimes you have to wait a while and be patient while still having hope for your desired outcome.

Make or Build

Building or making something takes a collection of materials or supplies and turns them into something else.

A stack of wood can become a birdhouse to feed the birds in the yard.

A pile of Lincoln Logs can become [a catapult](#).

Paper and some paint can become a beautiful piece of art.

An old cardboard box can become [a castle](#).

A worn tire and some rope can become a swing.

A bit of dirt and some plastic dinosaurs can become [a fairy garden](#).

Fabric and thread can become an amazing shirt.

Butter, flour, sugar and eggs can become cool [LEGO cupcakes](#).

You get the idea!

Building and/or making is hopeful because it shows kids they can change things by taking what is in front of them and working to turn it into something more . . . something better.

Share Stories

Sharing stories is always a great way to communicate a theory.

Stories of hope can be so helpful to kids. Because it is a story it becomes more memorable.

Try [Little Mole Finds Hope](#) if you would like a book on the topic, or tell your own stories.

Have your child tell you about a time when he or she was uncertain but believed everything was going to be ok and it was.

You can also tell them a story about your life, or of the life of someone they know, where hope played a part.

If you cannot think of anything, that is ok. Instead, make up a story together about someone who is hopeful.

Knowing that others went through difficulty or were afraid, but still believed they would get through it and that things were alright when it was over, lets them see that this is indeed a possible outcome.

Give

Giving of themselves to others allows kids to see that they are powerful and can make a difference. Have your kids pick a person or a charity that they would like to help.

Begin by having them think of a simple idea they could do and help them make it happen. For example, if their brother has been feeling sad or scared lately, get them to think of what they could do to for him. Maybe they could make him a card, say something kind, or play a game with him to help him feel better.

Or, if they hope that that other kids don't go hungry, perhaps they could do a few chores around the house, buy some canned goods and donate them to the local food pantry.

Giving is related to hope because kids will see that their willingness to give is a gift to others. This allows not only themselves, but others, to have hope for the future.

Reach for Goals

Setting and reaching goals is a big predictor of future success and this relates to hope. Have your child set a small goal and then plot out steps to take in order for them to complete it. Make it achievable. (Read more about [goal setting](#) here.)

This will vary depending on the child's age, but start with a simple goal and help them come up with the steps they need to take to make it happen. Then have them figure out *when* they are going to do each step.

Help them stick with it by giving them the tools needed to do what they want to do. Be their gentle, helpful guide.

Be sure to celebrate when they achieve their goal!

Hope for the future isn't the same as wishing. Hope has action behind it. It is not just wishing things would get better but actively doing something to help make that so.

Connect

One thing that gives us hope is being around those who are hopeful. Spending time with people who have a positive outlook, are happy, and enjoy their lives is key. Have your kids make a list of people who have a good attitude. Ask them questions like "why do you think Mary is so happy?" "What makes grandpa so hopeful?" "What hopes do you think our friend James has for his new business?"

Then have them connect with those people.

They can write them a letter telling them what they like about them. Or, they can jump on a phone call and have a short chat together. Have them ask a few questions about the person's hopes for the future. Perhaps you can help them set up a Skype session so they can see each other and just talk about things that make them feel hopeful.

Connecting with others who have hope shows kids that people they actually know are hopeful. It gives them good real-life examples of hope and helps them to learn to model hope in their own lives.

Be Grateful

There is nothing that is more important to hope than gratefulness.

You cannot be hopeful if you are not grateful for what you already have.

When you see the riches before you (and I am not speaking of monetary riches alone, but things money cannot buy) one learns that there is so much to be hopeful for!

Start a helpfulness journal and have your kids write down things they feel hopeful toward or things that they hope will happen.

Writing it down helps to make it more real. It sets their minds in motion and helps them think of possibilities.

It helps to cement their hopes and their dreams and move them on the path to reality.

Being grateful teaches kids that they have a reason for hope. It shows them that they have more than they thought possible already. Once they know this, they are able to focus toward hope for the future.

These activities did help the young boy at the top of this post.

- He and his mom planted seeds and he had plants to care for.
 - He made things for others.
 - He gave of himself and made a connect with someone outside his family that he could talk to.
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- Doing these activities helped him to focus on things beyond his fears and gave him some breathing space to sort out his feelings. It also helped dampen the feeling of helplessness and replace it with helpfulness.
 - When times are scary and your kids are upset, afraid or acting out be sure to get to the real underlying issues and see how you can help them.

Hope is important for all the reasons mentioned above.

It gives us a belief that things will get better.

It teaches us that we can:

- nurture things
- make something new from very little
- share our stories and learn from others
- give of ourselves
- reach for our goals
- connect with hopeful, positive people
- be grateful and
- act to make the future a brighter place for ourselves and others

- Hope is forward looking.
- Hope is a positive, optimistic outlook for our future.
- Hope helps kids cope with life when things get difficult.
- Hope provides a healthy way for kids to live and helps them be happier and have a more meaningful life.

By using these hope-related activities you ensure they will keep hope alive as they grow into adults and raise their own children.

Hope springs eternal.

By Author [Sheila Rogers](#)

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