

MY CONCEPTS - HOPE

Hope is the state that promotes the belief in good outcomes related to events and circumstances in one's life.

Hope is free. By being hopeful you increase your chances of getting the results that you want.

I grew up in Nigeria and was very influenced by the “Yoruba” cultural belief in fate and destiny. The belief was that every individual was pre-destined to accomplish certain things or achieve certain things in life and whether this happened or not was very dependent on, the choices we made (things we had control over) and fate (things we have no control over).

In Yoruba culture of storytelling and analogies are useful in gaining or regaining perspective and making good choices especially in difficult situations. Any challenge provides an opportunity for growth if I allow myself to perceive it in that manner. When things do not go as planned I have a choice, to perceive the outcome either as a work in progress or a total failure. How I perceive anything is just as important or sometimes more important than what is really happening.

Life is like a journey where nothing is ever easy or hard but relative to how I choose to see (perceive) it. I have learned more from the experiences that I initially perceived as unpleasant than from the ones I perceived as pleasant. Although I do not recommend unpleasant experiences as the main source of learning (I personally prefer mentorship) it is important to make the most of whatever life throws our way and find ways to get the results that we want.

How I choose to see things (**my perception**) is a remarkable tool that can work for me or against me. I am always influenced by how I see things and this in turn is directly related to how I have defined them in my mind therefore to do it differently, I have to be willing to define it differently in my mind.

To be functional I have to be able to adjust my perception as I am provided new information that challenges my previous knowledge and indicates clearly that there is a need for change. Dysfunction arises when I fail to recognize this information or simply ignore or deny it.

Every experience in life is an opportunity for learning and I am the one who defines an experience as good or bad. I try to discover the lesson in every experience although I admit there are some lessons I would have gladly skipped. What I have discovered is that every complex situation is made up of multiple simple blocks and the way I deal with a complex challenge is to break it down to its simplest form while still maintaining a keen sense of its complexity.

The most important relationship is the one that I have with myself and so I take time to take care of myself. It is only when I truly care for myself that I am able to truly care for others and I can't really give to anyone what I refuse to give to myself.

Any sense of control that I feel is a state of mind designed to keep me functional. To maintain this state of mind, it is important to differentiate between what I want to do and what I have to do, realizing that when there is a conflict between these two it is more functional to do what I have to. Frustration arises when I try to control events beyond my control, to counteract this and create a sense of control I focus my attention on the things that I can control (even if it was just my breathing) and then build it up from there.

Things do not always go the way I had hoped or planned but I have a choice on how I view the outcome, either as a work in progress or a total failure. The way that I perceive things is just as important or sometimes more important than what is really happening as this perception is what determines my response and the actions I take. I choose to discover the lesson in every experience and give myself the **gift of "hope"**.

Like my "sense of control", **hope is a state of mind** that can keep me functional. **The decision to be hopeful is a personal choice, it**

does not guarantee the results that I want but it makes it more likely to occur. Remember hope is free. **Being hopeful is a habit that is formed over time through repetition and reinforcement** and although getting the results that I want is a strong motivator I should learn to be hopeful even when results I want seem unlikely to occur.

A good analogy would be wishing to win the lottery but not buying a ticket. Although the odds of winning are quite slim there always is a chance but the odds become zero if I do not buy a lottery ticket. Life is a gamble and being hopeful in life is like buying a lottery ticket, there is no guarantee that I will win but at least I am one step closer to making it happen.

Being hopeful is not the same thing as wishing or fantasizing, it is a very active process that involves a willingness to convince myself over and over again about the possibility of what I want occurring. It is important to be cognizant of how things are while allowing myself to imagine how I would like them to be. Being hopeful is not about trying to will myself to succeed, it is about simply imagining myself succeeding, a form of “self programming”,

To be hopeful I have to:

1) Allow myself to believe in the possibility of what I hope for. To believe, I have to allow myself to imagine it, use my imagination to see it in my mind.

Using my imagination involves a willingness to put myself in an “awake trance state” such that I am fully aware of the present reality (based on probabilities) while allowing myself to experience an alternate reality (based on possibilities). I define possibilities as anything that can exist whether it is real or imagined but it may sometimes not follow the present laws of reality (i.e. our present understanding) and probabilities as something that is likely to occur or that can occur and it follows the present laws of reality.

2) I verbalize this expectation (say it out loud) consistent with the direction of my choosing. I do a ten and ten routine i.e. I say it ten times to make a unit and then say ten units a day. I say it out loud so

that my unconscious mind and brain hear it. It is important that I say it convincingly without necessarily reflecting on what I am saying but simply repeating it in a manner that when my brain hears it, it sounds like I mean it. I think of it as “self programming”.

3) I repeat the above process often. Reinforcing the results that I want occurs through repetition of the process. I become what I do most often and remember that being hopeful is a habit that can be formed through repetition. I become what I most repeat and this is one of the important factors that determine my direction. So I always make sure that my thoughts, words and actions are heading in the direction that I want to go.

My ability to succeed increased when I learned to **define things properly**, rather than obstacles I saw challenges, rather than failure I was finding ways to succeed and so on. During some of my most difficult experiences I would challenge myself to see (perceive) things differently, in a manner that allowed me to focus my energy in the direction I wanted to go. I was surprised to find that this produced unexpected but very beneficial results.

How I define a situation is integral to how I respond to it therefore I always strive to define things properly, in a manner that will take me in the direction that I want to go. Remember that trying not to fail is very different from trying to succeed and rather than seeing it as an obstacle or problem, define it as a challenge and rather than seeing failure, see it as finding ways to succeed. This step important in the same manner that learning how to walk is before I learn to run. I talk to myself out loud and encourage myself verbally to choose to see the up side of every situation.

Visualize where you want to be and permit yourself to believe in the certainty of it even though everything else around you may indicate otherwise. It is normal to experience a sense of frustration when trying to control events that you have no control over. You can recreate a sense of control by focusing your attention on things you can control (even if it was just breathing) and then build things up from there.

When I encourage someone to be hopeful I am actually asking them to be cautiously optimistic and not to willingly ignore the reality of the situation they are in, especially if it is bleak, but simply to entertain the notion or possibility of a more favourable outcome despite it all. People who are overly optimistic and approach life with excessive enthusiasm have always irritated me and I concluded (rightfully or wrongly) that they were overcompensating.

Intuitively the concept of balance makes sense to me, sometimes things are very good and sometimes they are very bad but the goal is to find that area, the sweet spot where things are just right and try to get everything to oscillate around it on a regular basis. I refer to it as being centred and I think different people have different ways of describing it but seem to recognize it when they find it.

Being hopeful is a choice I make and it is sometimes a very difficult one to make in a world that is high on facts and short on faith. It involves a willingness to accept and accommodate my vulnerability, to be accepting of things the way they are but stubborn enough to imagine a more desirable outcome and a willingness to make it happen.

Storytelling has always been a way of introducing the idea of hope, most children are introduced to this either through fairy tales with stories that start with “once upon a time” and end with “they all lived happily ever after”. Although well meaning, this over enthusiastic and unrealistic approach often poorly prepares us for the disappointments that may lie ahead. As we encounter more and more “once upon a times” and less and less “live happily ever after” we develop the habit of being less and less hopeful and some of us lose this gift all together.

Our ancestors were hopeful beings and have found ways to pass on this culture. Hope gives meaning to our existence, reinforces purpose and the notion that there is a reason why we exist, that it is worthwhile to be here and worthwhile to contribute to the existence and propagation of our species. The absence of hope is felt as despair, it is a natural consequence of not being able to fill the void and reinforce our purpose. When hope is absent or lacking our

perception of reality is often undesirable to us.

I have witnessed fortunate and unfortunate outcomes within or outside the control of the individual. Although the individual often had a role in the outcome, it was not always determined by this role i.e. just because you try hard does not mean that you will succeed (although it does increase your chances of succeeding). I have also observed people who don't try at all and continue to succeed in spite of themselves. In this regard, I feel that life is only as fair as we believe it to be and does not guarantee or promise us anything. We make things happen through our actions and being hopeful.

I found that people when very sick often presented with an intense feeling of vulnerability that made the notion that there are things out there greater than us more acceptable to them. The thought that something or someone cares for us is very appealing and the concept that our existence matters and is of value seems to be an important part of being human and remaining hopeful.

People who buy into this concept of value seem to attach importance and relevance to their existence and the existence of those around them, they thrive and their perception of wellbeing is heightened, their experience of life reported as very positive. When this concept is not reinforced the person does not do as well and the journey to find oneself could be more difficult.

Points to remember:

Being hopeful is not the same thing as wishing or fantasizing but it is a very active process that involves a willingness to convince yourself over and over again about the possibility of what you want occurring.

To be hopeful you have to:

- 1) Allow yourself to believe in the possibility of what you hope for.
- 2) Verbalize your expectation consistent with the direction of the results that you want. A form of “self programming”.
- 3) Repeat the above process often to reinforce the results.