

Hope, a reminder for all.

Spring has arrived, flowers are blooming even in our cactus-filled landscape, mornings are getting brighter earlier and evenings stretching the daylight longer. As we embark on our new season, let's take a moment to examine "hope".

According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, the word hope is described as "confidence in the future," especially "God or Christ as a basis for hope," from the 1300s. As early as 1200, hope is described as the "expectation of something desired;" and also "trust, confidence; wishful desire;". The idea of hope is a leap of faith. Hope implies that there is a belief in the unknown, the intangible, and with the optimistic outlook, a plan to create and follow.



Hope, to me, is one of the most quietly powerful words there is. It doesn't have strength in the shock power of words like—war, terror, hurricane. It also doesn't have sexy appeal like the words; beach, lipstick, resort. Hope as a word is a bit like the word air. A short word, a word that has no definite shape to envision and enlighten your senses, it just sits on the page until you really take in the significance. There would be no life without air, can't we say the same about hope?

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Spring – Time to be Revived



Spring!!! My two favorite seasons are fall and spring – so I was thrilled to realize spring was so close and we would be soon enjoying the final celebration of Easter (for those who are Christian). There are always a lot of articles written about spring and Easter and how both bring new life and hope after a time of darkness. For those of us in the valley we did have shorter days, but very little cooler weather and lots of warm days once we hit the 70's on February 6 and it's never cooled down again according to AccuWeather.com. So, we are moving into spring with hope for longer days and closer to average temperatures here! If I consider this in my approach to my life it would be for days full of more of what I hope and want to do with people I love; and average work/life balance.

Recently I was struck again when I was reading about people interviewing for jobs. The fact that many in Gen X will ask about how employees are able to manage work/life balance is notable. According to Workplacetrends.com employers are trying to respond to this newer demand with more flexible hours and settings. Still, 20% of employees are still reporting that they are working an average of 20 hours a week at home in addition to their regular hours at work. Technology appears to be driving this as employees are no longer working "regular hours" but are expected to be available by phone and/or email even on weekends and evenings. I hear this often when I see people. While it varies, I've seen it limit severely a client's ability to do anything due to excessive demands placed on her to the point she became ill from working 7am to 10pm most days with weekends requiring 4-6 hours of her time answering her boss's emails. I've also heard of individuals who are not required to work at all on off hours, although very few when in a professional position. Most of us may cry for work/life balance, but are now



working longer hours and finding our serenity and balance compromised. Gen X and Gen Y both tend to use the flexibility offered through many companies, i.e.: days to work at home, 4 day work weeks, vacation time, etc. better than others. So if you're not doing that, begin there. Then after using these employment flexibility tools, what to do?

Plan Activities for Yourself: Seems like an old idea, right? Well it's amazing how many times I hear that people are not planning an activity that they enjoy very often, if at all. If you have a family, be sure as a family that both a fun activity is planned that you all enjoy (movie night) as well as couple time (walk and coffee, dinner, go out dancing). Also create planned time for yourself (take a bath and pamper yourself, take a yoga class alone or with a friend, paint some pottery, take a walk with the dog). Having those activities on your calendar (yes, enter them on your calendar – don't just keep them in your head) will help you begin to see there are other parts of your life and you'll maintain awareness.

Make Time for Spirituality: Whether it's a church service or daily journaling or prayer or walking the labyrinth once a week, find what fits for you. I'm always amazed when I talk with one young woman who is finishing college and taking 15 units including her final project, doing 2 internships which each require a full day's work, volunteering for a group, maintaining an active social life, completing her job search, and yet she also finds the time to journal and pray each night. At her age (22) she has developed habits that would do all of us quite well regardless of our age. Aristotle said, "We are what we repeatedly do". So to be balanced, and include a dimension other than work and household chores, we must begin including those activities on a regular basis.

Limit Electronics: This is the toughest for so many people – myself included. It is the electronics that have brought the end of the 8 or even 10 hour work day. And also brought much in the way of ease of reading, access to information, and kept us in closer contact with loved ones. But much is in how we manage them – or they will not manage our lives, but take them over. I found it interesting that when I did a quick search for limiting electronics all that popped up were sources related to children. So, we know we need to or we are looking for ways to limit children at times – a good practice, for sure. I found an excellent article in which the author wrote her goals for limiting her own time, and I loved it because all of the guidelines were also expanding her life! Melissa Monahan wrote on Global Business Hub at Boston.com ideas like planning half-hour periods during which she will not even look at electronics, taking time during her travel weekly to read a book and not look at her email and phone, and phone a friend rather than text three times a week, etc. (see http://www.boston.com/business/blogs/global-business-hub/2013/09/screen_time_rul.html - it's worth the read!) While you may have work related concerns, it's important to also take time away – even those of us on 24-hour call for crises take breaks and it's incredibly important to your health and that of your relationships to do so.

If you do some of the above, you'll actually find you're bringing some life balance back. Winter is a time of hibernating and slowing down. Spring is a time for new adventures and growth. As Harriet Ann Jacobs said: "The beautiful spring came; and when Nature resumes her loveliness, the human soul is apt to revive also." So go outside and soak in the sensory experiences of walks, bike rides, working in the garden, or having a picnic at a park. And go within and with family and broaden your experiences each week. It's time to bloom!



Hope (cont.)

Hope is physically exemplified for me most during the spring. The noticeable changes to our landscape mark the passing of time in such a way that really drives home the beauty in our everyday world. Our desert landscape, brown much of the winter, appears more fertile in the spring with the citrus in bloom and the cactus soon following. Vibrant bursts of color appear out of what looked ominous—a thorny cactus one day seemingly unchanging, the next adorned with the equivalent of a flower in its hair. I see these changes, and I see hope. I relate that slow growing cactus to daily life, many days going through the repetitive motions we each tire of to a vibrant change of that bold colored flower on the cactus, shocking us out of the mundane. An awareness that was previously unseen takes hold and, from that, hope arises.

A recent article was written by Nicholas Kristof in the New York Times about hope. In it, he discusses the generations of despair of poverty-stricken areas of our world and the cyclical pattern of poverty, despair, loss of hope. The stunning, and dare I say hopeful, part of the article came in his reporting of a recent studies showing that once people are exposed to hope and understand that they can change their lives, they do so. He interviewed Esther Duflo, a co-author of the study and economist at Massachusetts Institute of Technology who states, “Poverty causes stress and depression and lack of hope, and stress and depression and lack of hope, in turn, cause poverty.” The point to this article was not to shine a spotlight on poverty, but quite the contrary, to shine a light on just what hope will do to incur change.

How does hope affect you and your life? Are you an optimistic person? Are you a goal setter? Are you spiritual? Feeding the hope in your life doesn't need to be complicated, here are a few ideas to get you started. Hope inspires hope. Spend time with friends or family who are optimistic and hopeful. Watch a TED talk or video that inspires hope. Meditate. Envision what hope looks like to you, a beach, a mountaintop view, graduation ceremonies, a flower growing out of a thorny cactus. Focus on the area you need the most hope. Write it down. Map out several different ways to get to that which you are hoping for and implement your plan.

For more information on hope, see:

An Emotion We All Need More of; Hope is a crucial element of our well-being; psychologists can teach people to gain or restore hope by Bernstein, Elizabeth. Wall Street Journal (Online) [New York, N.Y] 21 Mar 2016: n/a.

Recipes:

Sparkling Rosemary Limeade from thekitchn.com

1 cup lime juice
3/4 cup sugar
Peel of 2 limes
Sprigs fresh rosemary
4 -6 cups chilled sparkling water

Combine lime juice and sugar in a small saucepan and bring to a simmer, lower the heat and cook, stirring frequently, until the sugar is dissolved. Add lime peel and rosemary. Refrigerate overnight. Remove lime peel and rosemary, mix with the chilled sparkling water. Serve over ice with a small sprig of rosemary.



Salad Pizza

from Dinner, A Love Story

For the pizza sauce: In a medium saucepan over low heat, saute 1-2 garlic cloves in a lot of olive oil. Add 1 small onion (chopped), salt, pepper, a few shakes of red pepper flakes, and turn up heat slightly. Stir until onions have softened, about 3 minutes. Add 1 15-ounce can tomato puree (or sauce or diced tomatoes), a half dozen shakes of oregano.

Stir and simmer on low heat while you prepare the rest of the meal. If you have basil, definitely add a few shreds at this point.

For the salad: In a medium bowl, toss shredded lettuce (any kind you like, this was red and green oak lettuce), a healthy handful of chopped cherry or grape tomatoes, a few slivers of red onion, a lot of shredded Parm. Then add your red wine vinegar and olive oil to taste, like you're at a pizzeria. Toss.

For the pizza: Preheat oven to 450°F. Place store-bought pizza dough (or homemade if you are lucky enough to have it available) in the center of a lightly oiled square cookie sheet. Using your fingers, stretch it out to the sides of the pan as much as possible. Store-bought doughs are usually very springy so don't get frustrated. The goal is to get the crust as thin as possible. Using a ladle or a large spoon, distribute a few dollops of pizza sauce on dough. Add sliced fresh mozzarella to the kids half of the pizza, keeping the other half relatively cheese-free. (We cheated a little here.) Bake for 10 to 15 minutes (start checking after 10) until cheese is bubbling and crust is golden and crispy. Remove from oven, let cool slightly and top the cheese-less side with salad.



Resources:

Read:

Choosing Hope: Moving Forward from Life's Darkest Hours by Kaitlin Roig-DeBellis, Robin Gaby Fisher

http://www.amazon.com/Choosing-Hope-Moving-Forward-Darkest/dp/0399174451/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1458794238&sr=1-1&keywords=Choosing+hope

Hope for the Caregiver: Encouraging Words to Strengthen Your Spirit by Peter Rosenberger

http://www.amazon.com/Hope-Caregiver-Encouraging-Strengthen-Spirit/dp/1617956643/ref=sr_1_39?ie=UTF8&qid=1458840821&sr=8-39&keywords=nonfiction+hope

Chicken Soup for the Soul: Recovering from Traumatic Brain Injuries: 101 Stories of Hope, Healing, and Hard Work by Amy Newmark, Dr. Carolyn Roy-Bornstein, Lee Woodruff

http://www.amazon.com/Chicken-Soup-Soul-Recovering-Traumatic/dp/1611599385/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1458855797&sr=1-2&keywords=hope+brain+injury

Watch:

Chariots of Fire

Places in the Heart

Listen:

Calm Within: Music for Relaxation of Body and Mind

http://www.amazon.com/Calm-Within-Music-Relaxation-Body/dp/B015P8GW8K/ref=ntt_mus_dp_dpt_1

Hope by Susan Boyle

http://www.amazon.com/Hope-Susan-Boyle/dp/B00NCFX7NM/ref=sr_1_1?s=music&ie=UTF8&qid=1458855876&sr=1-1&keywords=hope



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And a blog...

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