

What Good is Hope?

Adapted by Personal Safety Nets® from The Power of Hope by Richard Innes, ACT International, and from Maxine Dunham, Perceptions: Observations on Everyday Life.

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While it's universally held in the scientific world that "hope" is not measurable or quantifiable, the wonder remains: What part does hope play in our lives? Do we need hope to make our lives better, or to survive? Does hope keep us moving ahead in life's journey?

Doctors and scientists continue to try to experiment with the concept of "hope" and more and more are finding inroads that are helping us at least see and understand the value of hope.

John Hopkins University, trying to understand the value of hope did an experiment with mice*. A group of mice was held tightly in the experimenters' hands so that they could not move. The mice struggled but were immobilized without being injured. Then after a set period of time, they were placed in a tub of water. They immediately sank, having learned that fighting was hopeless.

The second group of mice was held in the lab technicians' hands less tightly. The mice were given some hope of escaping the grip of the lab technician but without being actually free. After the same length of time, they were also dropped into a tub of water. These mice immediately swam to safety.

Life for all of us is filled with challenges and changes. If, when we believe these challenges leave us unable to cope, feeling hopeless—we will be overcome. If, when faced with the same challenges, we believe in the value of endurance, planning, people and hope—we will overcome.

** Though we at Personal Safety Nets decry the loss of mouse life, we included this research as fascinating evidence of the power of hope.*