



# Preparatory

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## Where Hope Meets Action

*When we face challenges, society often encourages us to “stay hopeful.” While this comes from a place of care, hope is sometimes misunderstood as simply wishing that circumstances will improve. In psychological terms, hope becomes most powerful when it is active - when it combines realistic understanding with meaningful action. Active hope does not ignore difficulty or promote forced positivity. Instead, it helps us to recognise that even when situations feel uncertain or overwhelming, there are still small ways to move forward. This shift, from waiting for change to participating in it, can play a significant role in emotional wellbeing and resilience.*

### Understanding Active Hope

Active hope involves more than feeling optimistic about the future. It reflects a mindset that integrates awareness, agency and action.

Key elements include:

- **Recognising reality** → acknowledging challenges honestly rather than minimising them.
- **Agency** → developing the belief that one’s actions can influence aspects of a situation.
- **Growth mindset** → proactively exploring possible ways forward, knowing that challenges are opportunities to develop abilities, learn, and improve through effort and persistence.
- **Establishing manageable steps** → engaging in small actions that create movement and build confidence, while viewing setbacks as opportunities to refine one’s approach rather than signs of failure.

Rather than asking young people to feel hopeful first, active hope empowers them to *act* in ways that gradually strengthen hope.





## Why Active Hope Matters for Children and Adolescents

Many learners experience moments when problems feel fixed or beyond their control. Academic stress, friendship difficulties, social pressures and emotional challenges can lead to feelings of helplessness or disengagement.

When young people feel stuck, they may:

- Withdraw from challenges,
- Avoid situations that feel uncomfortable,
- Assume that effort will not make a difference.



Active hope helps counter this by reinforcing a sense of possibility. By focusing on what *can* be done – even if the step is small – young people begin to rebuild confidence and motivation.

Research consistently shows that a sense of agency is closely linked to resilience. Learners who believe their actions matter are more likely to persist through setbacks and seek support when needed.

## The Role of Parents and Teachers

Adults play a powerful role in shaping how hope is experienced and practised. Small shifts in interaction can help children and adolescents move from passive wishing toward active engagement.

Helpful approaches include:

- **Validate before guiding**

Acknowledging a child's experience and feelings ("That sounds really hard") creates emotional safety and openness.

- **Focus on manageable next steps**

Large problems can feel overwhelming. Breaking tasks into smaller actions makes progress feel achievable.

- **Use language that promotes agency**

Some questions encourage participation rather than passivity, such as:

- "What feels possible right now?"
- "What could be one small step?"
- "Who could support you with this?"

- **Model flexibility and a growth mindset**

When plans do not work, demonstrating curiosity and adaptation teaches young people that setbacks are part of learning.



## Making Hope Concrete



For some learners (particularly those experiencing anxiety, low self-confidence or neurodevelopmental differences), hope can feel like an intangible thing. Turning hope into something visible and practical can support engagement.

Strategies may include:

- ★ Creating visual or written step-by-step plans
- ★ Offering structured choices rather than open-ended questions
- ★ Rehearsing possible responses to challenging situations
- ★ Recognising and celebrating small efforts and incremental progress

These approaches help transform hope from an idea into an experience.

## Recognising When Hope Becomes Passive

One of the challenges adults face is distinguishing between helpful encouragement and language that may unintentionally reinforce passivity. Young people who feel overwhelmed often express hope in ways that reflect helplessness rather than agency.

*Passive* hope may sound like:

- "I just hope it goes away."
- "Maybe things will change on their own."
- "There's nothing I can really do."



These statements are not signs of laziness or lack of motivation; they often reflect feeling stuck or unsure where to begin. When adults respond by offering reassurance alone, young people may continue waiting rather than engaging.

Shifting from passive to active hope involves gently guiding learners toward identifying possibilities and tangible actions. This does not require solving the entire problem. Instead, it begins with curiosity:

- "What part of this feels most manageable?"
- "If you could change one small thing, what might it be?"
- "What has helped even a little before?"



These conversations help young people recognise that hope is connected to action and continuous learning, not just expectation and fixed outcomes.

## Balancing Acceptance and Change

An important aspect of active hope is learning to hold two ideas at once: accepting what cannot immediately be changed while also exploring what remains within reach. Young people sometimes interpret hope as needing certainty or guaranteed success, which can lead to discouragement when outcomes remain unclear.

Adults can model a balanced perspective by acknowledging limits alongside possibilities:

- Recognising that some situations take time
- Emphasising effort rather than control over outcomes
- Supporting flexibility when plans need adjustment

This balance reduces pressure while maintaining momentum.

When children and adolescents understand that progress can be gradual and imperfect, they are more likely to continue engaging rather than giving up when challenges persist.



## Supporting A Mindset of Ongoing Growth

*Active hope is not about eliminating uncertainty or ensuring positive outcomes. Instead, it helps young people develop a way of approaching challenges that emphasises persistence, flexibility and participation. With repeated experiences of taking small steps while recognising their impact, confidence and resilience become strengthened over time.*



*When parents and teachers support active hope, they help young people understand that hope is not something that happens to them. It is something they learn to practise through action, reflection and supportive relationships.*

## Hope Is Power

"HOPE IS NOT A PASSIVE WISH—IT'S THE QUIET STRENGTH THAT KEEPS YOU MOVING WHEN EVERYTHING SAYS STOP. IT'S THE BELIEF THAT SOMETHING BETTER IS AHEAD, EVEN WHEN YOU CAN'T SEE IT YET." - RICH DORNISCH