



# Reasonable Hope

Hope's objective is an eagerly awaited future, with the arc of time between the present and the future filled with anticipation. Reasonable hope's objective is the process of making sense of what exists now in the belief that this prepares us to meet what lies ahead. With reasonable hope, the present is filled with working not waiting; we scaffold ourselves to prepare for the future.



## Characteristics of Reasonable Hope

How we think about hope has all to do with whether we can maintain our own. Hope confers many advantages but some ways of thinking about hope make it hard to feel and to sustain. I offer "reasonable hope" as a solution to this dilemma. The classic images of hope -- a butterfly, a rainbow -- set up expectations and standards that are without limit. Reasonable hope is both sensible and moderate, directing our attention to what is within reach more than what may be desired but unattainable. Reasonable hope is something we do with others.

### **Reasonable Hope is a Practice.**

Reasonable hope is something we do with others. It is a verb not a noun. Reasonable hope as a practice is not only about accomplishing a goal but also about aiming toward it.

### **Reasonable Hope Maintains that the Future is Open, Uncertain and Influenceable.**

Reasonable hope knows that an uncertain, unknowable future is full of possibilities.

### **Reasonable Hope Seeks Goals and Pathways to Them.**

We tend to feel hopeful when the goal is clear, the pathway known, and hopeless when the way is blocked, the goal obscure. With reasonable hope, we realize we must define realistic goals and pathways to them. We learn to be satisfied with less than what needs to be done in order to ensure that something be done.

### **Reasonable Hope Accommodates Doubt, Contradictions and Despair.**

Reasonable hope functions in a gray zone, where doubt, contradictions and despair definitely coexist. One can feel despair and reasonable hope simultaneously, an experience that many people have. Reasonable hope accepts that life can be messy. It embraces contradiction.

# Many Activities Support Reasonable Hope

**Resist Isolation.** When we are hopeless, it is all too easy to withdraw. Even though it may be the last thing we want to do, we need to join with others around issues we care about even if we are uncertain about what we have to offer.

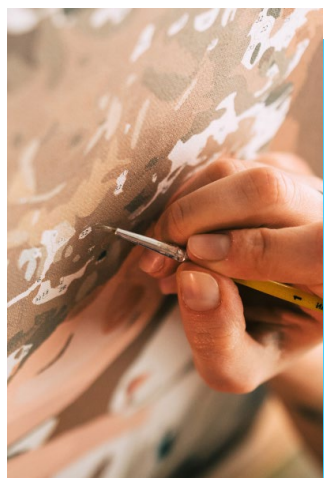
**Create a daily practice of awe.** A daily practice of awe - be it prayer, meditation, yoga, communing with nature or reflecting in community -- sustains reasonable hope.



**Believe that the Small is Not Trivial.** Sometimes we can become mesmerized by the enormity of the problems we face. With reasonable hope, we are not casting about for the perfect solution but are considering what may be good enough. From this perspective, we realize that small actions need not be trivial. They may also have ripple effects.

**Welcome Joy.** Moments of joy nourish us. Joy is a foundation for alliance and solidarity, qualities that are vital to doing reasonable hope with others.

**Enjoy Vicarious Hope.** Vicarious hope arises when we allow ourselves to be influenced by the hope that others express especially when we feel hopeless ourselves. At those times we can feel buoyed by others who are more hopeful than we are.



**Seek inspiration in the arts.** Inspiring work is out there. Artists are continually wrestling with essential dilemmas and finding ways to render them powerfully visible. Quieting ourselves to drink in the beauty and excitement of an artist's vision—whether music, dance, theatre, film, art or other – supports our own creativity, momentum and hopefulness.

**Look for courage.** Reasonable hope depends on people taking chances, on having the courage to take risks. Doing hope together means we can notice, reach out and support the whistle blowers, the risk takers, the brave so that they do not stay out on a limb, but instead are joined there, like birds on a telephone pole.

**Stretch the boundaries.** In difficult times, we often shut down. It doesn't help. Instead, consider taking a leap of faith: Stretch your boundaries and support others who are stretching theirs.

**Embrace Resistance.** Recognizing and resisting unfair conditions sustains a practice of reasonable hope. Resisting what is not just and pursuing what is just activates and promotes reasonable hope.