

Hope is Our Greatest Future

By Dr. Gregory A. Hudnall



At times, parenting can be one of the most difficult challenges because, unfortunately, children do not come with an instruction manual. As parents, we hope that our children will grow up in a safe environment and have a happy childhood. While the chances are good that will happen, it seems increasingly difficult to achieve. We live in a changing environment that continues to put additional pressure on us and, sometimes, even more pressure on our children.

Through working with youth, I believe that hope is our greatest future. While many of our youth will never struggle with depression or suicide, some will. Those that do struggle may feel helpless and hopeless at times. When I work with the families of these children, parents always ask me, "How do I help foster hope in my child?"

One of the most important first steps is to be that role model of "hope" ourselves as parents. Daniel Wong, a speaker/writer dedicated to students' success and happiness, has reported that if parents have emotional problems, their children are likely to have emotional problems. In addition, "unhappy people are also less effective parents" ("How to Raise a Happy, Successful Child: 25 Tips Backed by Science." Daniel Wong. Post updated Dec. 5, 2018). By being a role model of hope, parents show their children how to positively react to and cope with different situations.

The second step in helping foster hope in our children is to read to them. As parents, we can read stories of hope with them. Child psychologist Cindy Anderson recommends that since "many children's books have messages of hope, parents can "talk to [their children] about their favorite hero or heroine. Ask them what they like about the characters. Describe how that character shows hope and determination" ("Hopeful Thinking in Children is Important." Hope Springs Behavioral Consultants. Posted Nov. 24, 2013).

The third step in fostering hope in our children is to have one meal a day together with our entire family with no electronics or television. Children need to have the ability to listen to our conversations, to have us interact with their thoughts and opinions, and to see that we are listening and engaging with them. While we do not always have to agree with everything being shared, we can show positive ways to agree to disagree. The adage that quality is more important than quantity is not always true anymore. Quantity time can lead to quality time.

The fourth step in fostering hope is to show our children how to problem solve. Trying to fit into the world of youth can be very difficult at times. Add the pressure of social media, and it can be taxing for young people. Helping children learn (and then showing them by example) how to problem solve in difficult situations can help them learn to be successful in difficult situations. When I'm helping parents who are worried about their child, I refer them to a website (<https://biglifejournal.com/blogs/blog/how-teach-problem-solving-strategies-kids-guide>) that gives helpful information and free downloads.

These steps are only a few ways parents can foster hope in their children. Whatever steps are taken, parents should commit to taking the time to raise happy, hopeful children.



Dr. Gregory Hudnall
How To Give Your Child Hope

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First Lady of Utah Jeanette Herbert Gives Special Message for Utah Prevention Day

First Lady of Utah Jeanette Herbert addressed more than 12,000 students and teachers at the 2019 Utah Prevention Day with the Bees event at the Smith's Ballpark on May 2nd. Mrs. Herbert emphasized the importance of making safe and healthy choices and being drug and alcohol free.



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