University of South Florida

GERIATRIC WORKFORCE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (GWEP)

Learn@Lunch

Geriatric Education Series

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Making Life Better®
Hope in Older Adults

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Objectives for Today’s Presentation

• List the 3 primary components of hope theory
• List 3 attributes of a hopeful older adult
• Describe 2 strategies to help an older person be more hopeful
Think about an older adult who stood out to you, who impressed you.

• Why?
• What was she or he like?
• What had she or he done?
• What might have caused him or her to be this way?
How I got my start working with older adults

• Observations in a VA nursing home:
  • Man with blindness
  • Man with terminal cancer

• What differentiated these two men?
What is hope?

• Hope theory developed by C.R. (“Rick”) Snyder

• “hope is defined as a cognitive set that is based on a reciprocally derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-directed determination) and (b) pathways (planning of ways to meet goals)” (Snyder 1991, p. 571)

  • Personality (individual differences)
  • Way of thinking (cognitive)
  • 3 primary components:
    • Goals (desired outcomes)
    • Agency (“the will”)
    • Pathways (“and the ways”)

• “reciprocal, additive, and positively related” (p. 571)
How is hope measured?

- Trait Hope Scale
- State Hope Scale
- Children’s Hope Scale
Hope

Agencies
- My past experiences have prepared me well for my future
- I energetically pursue my goals
- I meet the goals that I set for myself
- I've been pretty successful in life

Pathways
- Even when others get discouraged, I know I can find a way to solve the problem
- There are a lot of ways around a problem
- I can think of many ways to get out of a jam
- I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are important to me

https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Cognition_and_Instruction/Beliefs_About_Learning_and_Knowledge
Is hope good for us?

• Yes (almost always)

• Across diverse samples in children and adults, hope is associated with:
  • better achievement
  • better psychological functioning
  • better physical health
  • more health-promoting behaviors
  • better social functioning
  • better coping and adjustment to stressors and physical illnesses
What do we know about hope in older adults?

• State of research (*Gum in press*):
  • 1 empirical study in 2000
  • 13 empirical studies in 2017
  • Including some large-scale studies in US, Canada, Germany, Greece, and Israel
What does hope look like in older adults?

• Fairly stable within persons across time ($r = .44$, $N = 1,286$, 6 years, Wurm et al., 2007)
• May decline with age ($r = -.14$; Wiest et al., 2013)
• Older adults may select and manage goals better than younger adults:
  • They tend to disengage more from goals
  • Goal engagement and disengagement are associated with well-being (Haase et al., 2013)
What are the attributes of hopeful older adults?

• **Physical functioning**
  • More hopeful older adults:
    • Perceive better physical health and functioning
    • Are likely to be alive 8 years later (HR = .80; Wiest et al., 2013)
    • May focus on some goals more than others (hopeful stroke survivors with severe activity limitations participated less in meaningful activities; Gum et al., 2006)
What are the attributes of hopeful older adults?

- **Mental well-being**
  - More hopeful older adults experience:
    - Less depression
    - Less suicidal ideation
    - Less negative affect
    - More positive affect
    - Better life satisfaction
    - Better overall mental well-being (*Gum in press*)
What are the attributes of hopeful older adults?

• **Attitudes and coping resources**
  • More hopeful older adults:
    • Respond well to stress (45-day study, N = 27; Ong et al., 2006)
    • Are wiser (Moraitou et al., 2013)
    • Perceive continued growth as they age (Steverink et al., 2001), which predicted hope six years later (Wurm et al., 2007)
    • Perceive better social relationships and sense of belonging
Can we help older adults be more hopeful?

- More evidence that can improve hope and related outcomes for younger adults (*Cheavens & Guter, in press*)
- Only 1 study tested a hope intervention with older adults – with major depression (N = 13, *Klausner et al., 1998*)

![Hope Scores Graph](chart.png)
Can we help older adults be more hopeful?

• Hope intervention benefited middle-aged, early retirees in Canada (Dubé et al., 2007)
• Other goal-focused behavioral interventions help older adults improve distress and functioning, such as:
  • Problem-solving therapy
  • Behavioral activation
How do we help older adults be more hopeful?

• Hope and other goal-focused interventions include:
  • Identifying values and goals
  • Setting goals that are meaningful, feasible, approach-oriented, measurable
  • Identifying sources of agency: self-care, self-talk, social support, strengths
  • Identifying pathways: routes, plans to achieve goals
  • How to overcome or get around obstacles

• May use strategies like:
  • Goal-mapping (map out goal, pathways, agency sources, obstacles)
  • Hope visualization exercise (mental rehearsal; Cheavens et al., 2006; Feldman & Dreher, 2012)
What about lost or blocked goals?

• Acknowledge and grieve losses
• Contemplate higher-order values and goals
• Discuss whether to disengage from goals
• Can you continue to pursue a blocked goal, while making sure you have other goals?  
  *(Gum in press)*
Can larger-scale changes improve older adults’ hope?

• Could we combat ageism and promote positive views of aging?
• Could we improve the built environment to help older adults utilize more pathways to achieve goals? (A. Gum, in press)
What does this mean for our interactions with older adults?
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For more information

• The Hope Scale:
  • [https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/resources/questionnaires-researchers/adult-hope-scale](https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/resources/questionnaires-researchers/adult-hope-scale)

• Classic review of the theory:

• Recent review of research with older adults:

• Recent review of hope interventions:
References


