



THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH HOPE

During college years, much of our future seems unclear. Perhaps you do not know if you will have enough money to finish school. Perhaps you live in a dorm and know you will have to find a new place when summer starts. Perhaps you wonder if you will ever fall in love and live happily ever after.

In the years before college, life was not necessarily easy, but at least we knew what would happen next. Switching from junior high to high school may have been a difficult adjustment, but you knew where you were headed. You also knew what was expected of you at home, and what you could expect in return. Most likely a stable routine was established.

Now, not only has your routine changed, but your whole outlook on life. You are presently forming new concepts about what life means. While it is wonderful to finally to be an individual and have freedom, there is also a lot of uncertainty: How do I want to live my life? How much control do I have over how my life turns out?

These are perfectly normal and legitimate questions to be asking. Before the establishment of higher education, these questions were not quite as pressing. After a man reached maturity he would join his father's occupation. When a woman reached her maturity she would marry and perform the same function she fulfilled at home. Today there are so many choices that the future can seem overwhelming. Uncertainties about the future can lead to fear of failure, even depression.

Faced with a complex and difficult to understand world, what can we do to give ourselves peace of mind? According to Bernie S. Siegel, M.D., author of *Love, Medicine, and Miracles*, "When faced with uncertainty there's nothing wrong with hope." This may sound very simplistic, and in fact—it is! In many situations it is important to be realistic, but that does not mean you can't also be hopeful. There is not such thing as "false hope" because hope is not statistical. It is psychological. Unless the odds are 100% against you, there is no reason to lose hope. If what you hope for does not come to pass, the hope itself can sustain you while accomplishing other things in the meantime. Are you concerned about becoming successful? Instead of cutting yourself down, have hope instead. Do you wonder if you will ever find a perfect mate? If so, hope is a lot more useful than worrying. Hope is not blind fate, lack of intellect, or something to be used in isolated situations. It is an abstract concept to be consciously worked into your personality.

Here are some guidelines for incorporating hope into your life:

1. Make an effort to pay attention to positive things. (i.e. someone tells you that you are creative.)
2. Notice other people who seem down on their luck and then suddenly things go their way.
3. Collect hopeful sayings:
 - "It is always darkest before the dawn."
 - "Those who never fail are those who never try."
 - "With every uncertainty, there is opportunity."
4. Let yourself feel emotion and fantasize as much as you intellectualize: DREAM.

Heidi Reeder

WHO IS ME

Self esteem and self image are common topics today. Everyone is looking for the quick answer to happiness and acceptance. Our days are filled with "if onlys" and "what ifs" and professionals are making millions on quick weight loss, stress reduction and the cure to any of our daily problems. When our lives are scattered and full of confusion we become very vulnerable to these quick remedies which will change our lives. Life is full of pressure yet without it we would have no drive to function.

It's time to take control of your own life. You know better than anyone what you need. Of course some of these "quick fixes" will make you feel better and in control for a while, but isn't it the life long day-by-day feeling of self that you should be concerned with. Have you ever noticed that people who have truly accepted themselves as a unique and worthwhile person rebound back from life's pressures by relying on a strong sense of self? They understand that they have done the best that they could at the time to get where they are right now. This means not dwelling on "I could have" or "I should have" or "If only . . ." Instead of a "them" statement—try taking this on as a "me" or "I" and learn the skill of self validation.

It's not what you look like or what you do that signifies who you are. You are your thoughts, beliefs, values and feelings and the expression of these in your tasks and accomplishments. It's easy to take on the burden of other people's expectations as your own. The problem with this is the inability to validate oneself as okay. Feeling okay means attaining some point on the yardstick of the world—but what about your own agenda? These measuring points demand things like weighing a certain amount, wearing a certain size, being married by a certain age, making a certain GPA— "certains" which are certainly not yours unless you want them. Re-access your feelings and figure whose values they are. Do you want to own these feelings or do they really belong to someone

else? If you don't value these, cast them aside and acknowledge that you are an individual who is moving through life to the beat of your own drum.

An important part of this process is getting in touch with your body and feelings. Through the years many of us have taken on negative thoughts about our bodies and our intellectual capacity because of other's expectations. Who says that you have to look a certain way and who says that you must fit into one size of jeans all your life? Who determines your occupation of choice or acceptable job or hairstyle? The who is important because you are valuing this person or persons opinions over your own. How could these be the correct choices for you if they make you question yourself?

Our doubtful or vulnerable side is the little child within all of us who is yearning acceptance. It's important to be in touch with the little you inside.

Learning to listen to and validate oneself is a process of growth and a risky one at that. As one turns away from the "shoulds" set by others toward listening to oneself, no doubt there will be doubt and uncertainty. Our schools don't teach us about self worth; they teach us tasks and skills—and the media impales us with ideal looks, smells, life-styles . . . The feeling may be that you're standing up while the world around you sits down. But remember today is yours.

Dana Hiatt



The Counseling Center is currently offering support groups in the following areas:

- ✓ **Interpersonal Process:** A group for self-exploration in which members learn about their styles and patterns of relating to others by focusing on interactions and experiences within the group context.
- ✓ **Adult Children of Alcoholics**
- ✓ **Adult Children of Alcoholics for Women Only**
- ✓ **Women's Support Group:** exploration of self esteem, power, attitudes and relationships in a supportive environment.
- ✓ **Women Who Love Too Much:** for women who are interested in exploring underlying reasons for why they are addicted to painful love relationships.
- ✓ **Women of Color Support Group**
- ✓ **Stop the Weighting Game:** for people who find themselves preoccupied with food, weight and body image
- ✓ **Coping With Food and Weight:** for development of healthier attitudes and feelings toward food and weight
- ✓ **Eating Disorders Group**
- ✓ **Interpersonal Process Group for Gay Men**
- ✓ **Sexual Identity Group:** for people questioning their sexual identity
- ✓ **Older than Average Student Support Group**

For more information and a listing of times and locations, call the Counseling Center at 686-3227. Groups are available to University students and are provided at no charge.