

Dear Class,

Remember, [resilience](#) is the ability to overcome adversity. Resilience allows us to handle discomfort and move forward. Resilience is the ability to accept what is beyond our control and work around it. As I've said before there really isn't much we can do about what life has sent our way, but there is a WHOLE lot we can do about how we choose to deal with it.

I know these are very trying times, to say the least. All I can say is that everything is upside down, again, to say the least. Who in a million years would ever think that they would homeschool their children, have virtual playdates, work remotely (everyday), all while physical distancing from those they care about! Difficult times bring on difficult feelings. And dealing with difficult feelings during this time is an important part of choosing how we deal with what life sends our way. We can't be resilient if we don't deal with these feelings.

During this difficult time, I've felt the need to write about how to be resilient. Given that resilience is the ability to overcome adversity and we are in a very adverse situation, I thought writing about the skills that research has shown allows us to deal with and effectively overcome difficulty would be important. However, I want to make it very clear that, first, I'm not and never will advocate for ignoring the difficult feelings that arise as a result of this pandemic and life in general. Second, I want to make it really clear that not only do I not advocate for ignoring difficult feelings, I believe if we don't feel, acknowledge and process those difficult feelings the path to resilience becomes a very rocky one.

Having said all of the above, the fact still remains that I come from a [Positive Psychology](#) perspective. Everything I teach is based on Positive Psychology. Everything I believe in, for the most part (except when I'm feeling negative), is based on Positive Psychology. Positive Psychology (despite the unfortunate name) is the **scientific study** of human flourishing. It is an umbrella term for a variety of scientific theories as to what enables a person to flourish - to thrive, not merely survive. Historically psychology has been based on a disease model, let's look at what is wrong with you and let's fix it. [Theoretically](#) fixing what is wrong makes you better. However, truth be told, being disease free does not ensure well-being or flourishing, it only ensures being disease free. Positive Psychology on the other hand fosters well-being. It looks at what is right with you and offers scientifically proven ways to promote further well-being and engender flourishing. I like this paradigm for understanding human functioning because, for me, it offers hope. And I believe hope is critical for well-being and happiness and I like being happy.

Which brings me to what I've been thinking about this week - hope and optimism. [Hope and optimism](#) tend to be used interchangeably therefore I'm going to make life easy and stick to the word hope. [Hope](#) is defined as believing the future will be a brighter one and knowing how to make that happen (this last part of the definition is very important). Research is really clear - hope and psychological well-being are correlated. And I

believe that at a time like this, hope is of the utmost importance for our survival, let alone well-being. Having [hope](#) is what will get us through!

I want to make something very, very clear. When I talk about hope I'm not talking about blind [hope](#) and I'm not talking about ignoring the difficulties in life. This is not an either/or proposition it's an and proposition. I'm talking about feeling the entire spectrum of feelings AND including hope. However, I'm talking about a realistic hope, one that acknowledges the reality of the situation, enables us to deal with it **and** looks forward to making the future brighter. Usually this kind of hope is called [realistic optimism](#) (remember I'm using the word hope just to make things easier). And has a lot to do with our thoughts (See last weeks posting).

I know these are uncertain times. What's the future going to look like, will the virus come back, will there be enough testing, will the kids go back to school in the fall, what will that look like, and on and on the uncertainty goes. Even though the future is uncertain it doesn't mean we can't have hope. The beauty of hope is, irrespective of what is happening around you, if you are a hopeful person you will always find things to be hopeful about. The beauty of hope is that it can happen during the tough times. Actually, at least for me, when things get tough, is when I am most hopeful. Hope is what gets me up in the morning after having had a bad - the knowledge and excitement that I can make the new day a better one gives me hope. Remember a lot about being hopeful is what you tell yourself, your thoughts.

The beauty of hope is that since it is a belief in a brighter future and in one's ability to achieve that future, hope prompts a person to action. And action fosters a sense of self-efficacy and self-control and when we feel self-efficacious and in control we feel good. In other words, put in very simple terms, when you are hopeful you act and when you act you tend to feel better.

So how do we have hope? There are many [ways](#) to help yourself be hopeful. Your Best Possible Future [Exercise](#) was developed by Laura King and has been proven to substantially increase hope. Hope researcher Shane Lopez said that the best way to be a hopeful person is to have hopeful [people](#) in your life, according to him hope is contagious. And last but not least, Action for Happiness does a monthly calendar on actions you can take everyday to increase happiness. This is their [Optimistic October](#) calendar.

Wishing you hope and optimism,
Susan