

RESEARCH ARTICLE SUMMARIES

1. Dimensions of Hope in Adolescence: Relations to Academic Functioning and Well-Being

Bryce et al. (2020) examine how two complementary forms of hope—cognitive and behavioral—shape adolescents’ academic functioning and psychological well-being. Their study addresses a gap in existing research by analyzing both forms of hope together, allowing them to identify the unique contributions each makes during middle and high school.

Cognitive hope reflects the mental processes involved in pursuing goals. It centers on agency, or the belief that one can achieve desired outcomes, and pathways, or the ability to generate strategies for reaching those outcomes. These cognitive elements help students sustain motivation, adapt to obstacles, and maintain progress toward their goals. Behavioral hope represents the action-oriented side of hope and is expressed through intentional self-regulation. This includes selecting goals, planning and refining strategies, and adjusting approaches when challenges arise. Together, these behaviors reflect the practical skills students use to translate hopeful thinking into purposeful action.

A key premise of the article is that both cognitive and behavioral hope are malleable, meaning they can be strengthened through intentional supports. They are also measurable, allowing educators and researchers to assess students’ levels of hope and track developmental changes. Importantly, hope is attainable for all students; it is not a fixed trait but a developmental resource that can be cultivated through supportive environments and opportunities for meaningful goal pursuit.

The study includes 643 students in grades 5–12. Cognitive hope remains relatively stable across adolescence, while behavioral hope shows slight increases in components such as goal selection and strategy optimization. This suggests that while students’ hopeful thinking may remain consistent, their ability to regulate behavior in service of goals may strengthen with age.

Cognitive hope consistently predicts GPA, cognitive engagement, and psychological engagement across both middle and high school. Behavioral hope also predicts engagement, particularly in middle school, but its effects are less consistent. Cognitive hope is also associated with lower levels of stress and anxiousness, especially in high school, indicating its importance for emotional well-being.

Overall, the authors highlight hope as a multifaceted developmental asset. Cognitive hope—rooted in goal-directed thinking, pathways, and agency—emerges as a strong predictor of academic and psychological outcomes, while behavioral hope provides the regulatory skills needed to act on goals. Both forms of hope can be intentionally cultivated in school settings.

Bryce, C. I., Fabes, R. A., Alexander, B. L., & Fraser, A. M. (2020). Dimensions of hope in adolescence: Relations to academic functioning and well-being. *Psychology in the Schools*, 57(2), 171–190.

RESEARCH ARTICLE SUMMARIES

2. “Building hope for the future”: A program to foster strengths in middle-school students.

Marques, Lopez, and Pais-Ribeiro (2011) evaluate a structured, hope-based intervention designed for middle-school students. The program aims to strengthen students’ psychological resources by teaching them how to set meaningful goals, generate multiple strategies for achieving those goals, and build the motivational energy needed to sustain progress. These three components—goals, pathways, and agency—form the foundation of Snyder’s hope theory, which views hope as a cognitive strength that guides purposeful action.

The authors emphasize that hope is malleable, meaning it can be intentionally developed through skill-building and supportive environments. It is also measurable, allowing researchers to track changes over time using validated scales such as the Children’s Hope Scale. Importantly, hope is attainable for all students; it is not a fixed trait but a set of cognitive and behavioral skills that can be taught, practiced, and reinforced.

The study uses a quasi-experimental design with 31 sixth-grade students in the intervention group and a matched comparison group of 31 peers. Students completed assessments of hope, life satisfaction, self-worth, mental health, and academic achievement at baseline, post-intervention, and again at 6- and 18-month follow-ups. Teachers and parents also participated in a brief training to reinforce hope-building practices in students’ daily environments.

Results show clear benefits for students who participated in the program. Immediately after the intervention, these students demonstrated higher hope, greater life satisfaction, and stronger self-worth compared to the comparison group. These gains were largely maintained over the 18-month follow-up period, indicating that the intervention produced durable changes. Academic achievement and mental health showed smaller but positive patterns over time. The comparison group did not show similar improvements.

Overall, the study provides evidence that a brief, structured intervention can meaningfully strengthen adolescents’ hopeful thinking and related psychological assets. By teaching students how to clarify goals, generate pathways, and activate agency, educators can help them build lasting cognitive and emotional resources that support well-being and academic success.

Marques, S. C., Lopez, S. J., & Pais-Ribeiro, J. L. (2011). “Building hope for the future”: A program to foster strengths in middle-school students. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 12(1), 139–152. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-009-9180-3>

RESEARCH ARTICLE SUMMARIES

3. Camp HOPE as an intervention for children exposed to domestic violence: A program evaluation of hope and strength of character.

Hellman and Gwinn (2017) evaluate Camp HOPE America, a trauma-informed summer camp designed for children exposed to domestic violence. These children often face elevated risks for emotional distress, behavioral challenges, and long-term health concerns, making early, strengths-based interventions essential. Camp HOPE uses Snyder's hope theory as its foundation, emphasizing that hope is malleable, measurable, and attainable—a skill set that can be intentionally strengthened even among youth who have experienced significant adversity.

Hope theory frames hopeful thinking as a cognitive process involving goals, pathways, and agency. Children learn to identify meaningful goals, generate multiple strategies to achieve them, and build the motivational energy needed to sustain progress. These components are especially important for children exposed to domestic violence, who often encounter repeated barriers and may struggle to envision positive future possibilities.

Camp HOPE integrates these concepts through structured activities, daily affirmations, group discussions, and counselor-guided reflection. The program encourages children to set achievable goals, explore alternative pathways when obstacles arise, and practice agency through supportive peer and adult relationships. Activities also promote character strengths such as grit, curiosity, gratitude, and self-control.

The study uses a matched pre-post design with 229 campers. Children completed the Children's Hope Scale before camp and again on the final day, while counselors provided observational ratings of hope and character strengths. Results show significant increases in children's self-reported hope from pre- to post-camp. Counselor assessments also indicate meaningful gains in hope and multiple character strengths, including zest, grit, optimism, gratitude, curiosity, social intelligence, and self-control. Correlation analyses reveal that higher hope scores are associated with stronger character traits, suggesting that hope may function as a psychological resource that supports adaptive behavior and emotional resilience.

Overall, the evaluation provides evidence that Camp HOPE America can strengthen hopeful thinking and positive character development among children exposed to domestic violence. By teaching goal-setting, pathway generation, and agency, the program helps children build cognitive and emotional tools that support healing and future-oriented growth.

Hellman, C. M., & Gwinn, C. (2017). Camp HOPE as an intervention for children exposed to domestic violence: A program evaluation of hope, and strength of character. *Child & Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 34(3), 269–276.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-016-0460-6>

RESEARCH ARTICLE SUMMARIES

4. Developing hopeful minds: Can teaching hope improve well-being and protective factors in children?

Kirby et al. (2022) evaluate *Hopeful Minds*, a 12-lesson, school-based curriculum designed to strengthen students' psychological resources by explicitly teaching the cognitive skills that underlie hopeful thinking. The program is grounded in Snyder's hope theory, which frames hope as a learnable cognitive process involving goals, pathways, and agency. These components help young people identify meaningful aims, generate multiple strategies for achieving them, and sustain the motivation needed to pursue those strategies. Because hope is malleable, measurable, and attainable, the authors argue that structured instruction can meaningfully strengthen it during early adolescence—a developmental period when hope often declines.

The study uses a one-group pretest–posttest design with 153 students ages 11–14 in Northern Ireland. Students completed validated measures of hope, depression, anxiety, resilience, emotional regulation, and coping skills before and after the program. The curriculum, delivered weekly by trained facilitators, teaches students how hope works in the brain, how to set purposeful goals, how to create pathways, how to manage setbacks, and how to shift unhelpful thinking patterns.

Results show a significant increase in students' hope scores after the intervention, indicating that hope can be intentionally strengthened through instruction. Resilience also improved, along with adaptive coping strategies such as stoicism and seeking social support. Although changes in depression, anxiety, and emotional regulation were not statistically significant at the group level, further analyses reveal that hope is strongly associated with improvements across nearly all well-being indicators. Higher hope at post-test predicts lower depression and anxiety, greater resilience, more positive emotion, better emotional control, and stronger coping skills. Rumination is the only variable not associated with hope.

Overall, the study provides evidence that teaching hope can enhance protective factors linked to mental health. By helping students clarify goals, generate pathways, and activate agency, *Hopeful Minds* supports the development of cognitive and emotional skills that buffer against stress and contribute to healthier developmental trajectories.

Kirby, K., Sweeney, S., Armour, C., Goetzke, K., Dunne, M., Davidson, M., & Belfer, M. (2022). Developing hopeful minds: Can teaching hope improve well-being and protective factors in children? *Child Care in Practice*, 28(4), 504–521.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13575279.2021.1924121>

RESEARCH ARTICLE SUMMARIES

5. Responding to adverse childhood experiences: The science of hope as a framework for action.

Hellman, Pharris, and Muñoz (2023) argue that the science of hope offers a powerful, theoretically grounded framework for responding to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). While decades of research have established that ACEs are linked to long-term health risks, behavioral difficulties, and reduced well-being, far less is known about how to intervene effectively outside clinical settings. The authors propose that hope theory—rooted in positive psychology—provides a clear, actionable model for strengthening the cognitive processes that help individuals recover from adversity.

Hope theory centers on three interrelated components: goals, pathways, and agency. Goals give direction and meaning; pathways represent the strategies a person can generate to reach those goals; and agency reflects the motivational energy needed to pursue those strategies. These components work together to support future-oriented thinking, problem-solving, and persistence. Because hope is malleable, measurable, and attainable, it can be intentionally strengthened through supportive relationships, structured interventions, and community-based practices.

The authors highlight that trauma can disrupt hopeful thinking by reducing cognitive resources, narrowing attention, and increasing rumination. ACEs can also undermine trust in relationships, limiting access to social pathways that support goal pursuit. As a result, individuals with high ACE exposure often struggle to generate pathways or sustain agency, leading to lower hope. Yet emerging research shows that hope can be rebuilt. Studies across diverse populations—including survivors of intimate partner violence, individuals experiencing homelessness, foster youth, and adolescents—demonstrate that increasing hope is associated with improved coping, emotional regulation, empowerment, and life satisfaction.

The paper argues that trauma-informed care must move beyond awareness and symptom management toward frameworks that actively build strengths. Hope theory provides a simple, cross-disciplinary language that can guide interventions in schools, community programs, child welfare systems, and other non-clinical settings. By teaching goal-setting, pathway generation, and agency, practitioners can help ACE survivors develop the cognitive tools needed to buffer long-term effects of trauma and pursue healthier futures.

Hellman, C. M., Pharris, A. B., & Muñoz, R. T. (2023). Responding to adverse childhood experiences: The science of hope as a framework for action. *Advances in Social Work*, 22(3), 1066–1083. <https://doi.org/10.18060/25632>

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6. Nurturing the hope of youth in care: The contribution of mentoring.

Sulimani-Aidan, Melkman, and Hellman (2019) examine how mentoring relationships contribute to hopeful thinking among youth preparing to leave out-of-home care. These adolescents face a critical developmental transition requiring them to set meaningful goals, sustain motivation, and identify workable strategies for independent living. The authors use Snyder's hope theory as the foundation for understanding this process, emphasizing that hope is malleable, measurable, and attainable, even for youth who have experienced significant adversity.

Hope theory frames hopeful thinking as a cognitive process involving goals, pathways, and agency. Goals provide direction; pathways represent the strategies generated to reach those goals; and agency reflects the motivational energy needed to pursue those strategies. Youth in care often struggle with these components due to instability, limited support, and past trauma, making hope an essential protective factor during the transition to adulthood.

The study includes 148 adolescents ages 16–19 living in residential care or foster placements in Israel. Participants completed validated measures of overall hope, agency, and pathways. They also reported on characteristics of their mentoring relationships, including whether mentors were formal or informal, how long the relationship had lasted, and the extent to which mentors served key functions such as role modeling, providing warmth, promoting independence, or supporting academic and career decisions.

Results show that mentoring significantly contributes to hope beyond individual background and placement characteristics. Longer mentoring relationships and mentors who function as role models, parental figures, or independence promoters are associated with higher levels of hope. These mentoring functions appear to strengthen both agency and pathways thinking, helping youth envision future goals, generate strategies, and sustain motivation. Youth with lower parental education or those placed in welfare residential settings reported lower hope, highlighting the importance of targeted support.

Overall, the study demonstrates that mentoring can meaningfully nurture hopeful thinking among youth in care. By reinforcing goal-setting, pathway generation, and agency, mentors help adolescents build the cognitive and motivational resources needed to navigate the challenges of emerging adulthood.

Sulimani-Aidan, Y., Melkman, E., & Hellman, C. M. (2019). Nurturing the hope of youth in care: The contribution of mentoring. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 89(2), 134–143. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000320>