

30 DAYS OF HOPE



TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Day 1:</u>	<i>What Can Hope Do?</i>	<i>4</i>
<u>Day 2:</u>	<i>Three Ways to Share Hope Today</i>	<i>5</i>
<u>Day 3:</u>	<i>Mental Health Goals for Every Parent.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<u>Day 4:</u>	<i>Reclaiming 2022.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<u>Day 5:</u>	<i>Dead Batteries Don't Do Anyone a Lot of Good.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<u>Day 6:</u>	<i>Life Happens. Don't Go it Alone.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<u>Day 7:</u>	<i>Take a Hope Inventory.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<u>Day 8:</u>	<i>What is your Family Thankful for?.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<u>Day 9:</u>	<i>Three Ways to Share Hope Today.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<u>Day 10:</u>	<i>Faith and Mental Health.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<u>Day 11:</u>	<i>A Mustard Seed of Faith.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<u>Day 12:</u>	<i>Live a Life of Passion.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<u>Day 13:</u>	<i>Take a Hope Inventory.....</i>	<i>20</i>
<u>Day 14:</u>	<i>How Can I Help My Child When They Are Emotional.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<u>Day 15:</u>	<i>Three Ways to Share Hope Today.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<u>Day 16:</u>	<i>Who's in Your Corner?.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<u>Day 17:</u>	<i>The Power of Self-Stewardship.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<u>Day 18:</u>	<i>Three Ways to Share Hope Today.....</i>	<i>27</i>
<u>Day 19:</u>	<i>Whose Voice are You Listening to?.....</i>	<i>28</i>
<u>Day 20:</u>	<i>Parenting: Using Encouragement Over Praise.....</i>	<i>29</i>
<u>Day 21:</u>	<i>Hope Initiates. Hope Activates.....</i>	<i>30</i>
<u>Day 22:</u>	<i>Our Mind is Our Biggest Battlefield.....</i>	<i>32</i>
<u>Day 23:</u>	<i>Three Ways to Share Hope Today.....</i>	<i>34</i>
<u>Day 24:</u>	<i>Praying with Anticipation.....</i>	<i>35</i>
<u>Day 25:</u>	<i>Confidence is Key.....</i>	<i>36</i>
<u>Day 26:</u>	<i>H.O.P.E. in Parenting.....</i>	<i>37</i>
<u>Day 27:</u>	<i>Knowing God's Will.....</i>	<i>38</i>
<u>Day 28:</u>	<i>Managing Stress and Anxiety.....</i>	<i>39</i>
<u>Day 29:</u>	<i>Take a Hope Inventory.....</i>	<i>41</i>
<u>Day 30:</u>	<i>7 Factors That Impact Hope.....</i>	<i>42</i>

DAY 1

JANUARY 17

What Can Hope Do?

Day 1 of Unleashing Hope Devotional

Tough circumstances are no match for the kind of inner strength fueled by hope. It's the difference between a situation destroying your future and a situation galvanizing your potential.

A Jewish boy in Germany written off as unteachable, who has hope, changes our understanding of the universe forever. - Albert Einstein

A soldier tortured in Japanese prison camps for years, but who never lost hope, returns to America and lives a life inspiring millions. - Louis Zamperini

Hope liberates.

A burn victim told he will never walk again, but who has hope, sets a world record running the mile. - Glenn Cunningham

Hope motivates.

A virtuoso musician who goes deaf in his prime, but who has hope, composes masterpieces that stand the test of centuries. - Ludwig Von Beethoven

Hope initiates.

An innocent prisoner, beaten and shipwrecked, but who has hope, writes most of the New Testament. - The Apostle Paul

Hope activates.

A paralyzed child who responded with hope, would later respond to "Mr. President". - Franklin D. Roosevelt

Hope is the beginning of everything.

DAY 2

JANUARY 18

Three Ways to Share Hope Today

Adapted from Unleashing Hope Digital Resource Guide

As you're working on refueling the hope in your own life, take the opportunity to unleash hope to other people in your family and community. Spoiler alert: doing this will help hope grow in your life too!

Here are three ways you can unleash hope today:

1. Take flowers to a hospital and give them to someone who hasn't had any visitors.
2. Invite someone over for dinner.
3. Give clothes to a shelter.

DAY 3

JANUARY 19

2022 Mental Health Goals for Every Parent

Adapted from Parent Cue Live: [Stephanie Thomas](#)

If 2020 felt like a free fall, 2021 brought us a rollercoaster of emotions. Today, let's talk through a few goals we might carry into the new year to bolster us as parents and people.

Bonus: these are worthwhile goals for non-pandemic times as well.

Mental Health Goal 1: Take care of yourself every day.

Raise your hand if you missed a few showers last year. Eww, okay, put your hand down. We're kidding, of course. Zoom meetings and toddler tantrums might mean the basics took a back seat.

So, let's take the basics back. Do something that makes you feel cared for every day. If you're thoroughly clean (you're awesome, we get it) maybe you'll set aside time to work out, paint your nails, fix your hair or shave your face. The toddler will be okay. Take time to care for yourself so that you can be prepared to care for those around you when they need it!

Mental Health Goal 2: Create a safe space in your home.

Weeks ago, your first-grader set up a living room Legoland to play with during breaks from quarantine-virtual-school. And your four-year-old's Magnatiles creations regularly spill out from his room into the hallway and beyond.

You're all for relaxing a bit during these times, but the kid stuff is starting to take over! Okay, grab some figurative caution tape and declare a spot (or a whole room!) in your home completely off-limits. While you're at it, give your kids a deadline for creativity, saying something like, "Every Saturday, we'll do a clean sweep!"

Mental Health Goal 3: Establish a rest-time routine.

Everybody needs a little time away—and now more than ever. Choose a specific time of day and call it rest time for all ages.

Rest time looks like this: Each person in the family gets a room to themselves and an hour (or two) to engage in their interests without interruption. You might set out a few favorite toys and play a podcast or audiobook for younger kids. Older kids and teens might read, draw, listen to music or work on a project or hobby.

And on those weeks when your kids aren't quarantined from school exposure—happy days!—go ahead and institute rest time on the weekends. You can thank us later.

Mental Health Goal 4: Accept that the negative emotions aren't about you.

If we adults are struggling to keep a smile on our faces, we can only imagine how hard it must be for kids to cope. After all, they've encountered the same changes we have with less understanding and less skills to work through what they're feeling.

So, the next time your kid inexplicably falls apart, your middle schooler slams a door, or your teen looks at you with eyes that can only mean, "YOU DO NOT GET IT," repeat the following helpful phrase to yourself: "This is not about me."

Then, when you're calm and ready, you might approach your child—young or old—with arms outstretched and say, "Would you like a hug? Talk to me about what's going on."

It's also a good idea to set some healthy boundaries. Let your kids know they are welcome to have big, uncomfortable feelings, but they're not allowed to treat you unkindly. Listen, talk and move forward.

Mental Health Goal 5: Replace magic with moments.

Here's a message that's hard for our parenting generation to hear: Your kids don't need a magical childhood. They simply need moments of connection with you. [2022 Mental Health Goals for Every Parent - Parent Cue \(theparentcue.org\)](https://theparentcue.org/2022-mental-health-goals-for-every-parent/)

We can get there with Pinterest-parenting, sure. But we don't have to. We can also get there by [making the most of a few moments](#) throughout the day.

Ask questions to get to know your kid better. Listen to good tunes together while cuddled up on the couch. Play a quick game, take a short walk or give a high five in passing.

Dig into what they're into (we love requesting books from the library that scratch the latest itch).

You might even craft it up, bake it up, or party it up—Instagram style. So long as you're doing so with no obligation and lots of opportunity for connection.

Our hope is that you'll find a few doable mental health goals you can latch onto for the coming year. After all, we're better parents to our kids when we take care of ourselves.

DAY 4 JANUARY 20

Reclaiming 2022

*Reprinted with permission from [Rev. Stephen Walters, M.Div., M.A.](#)
The Summit Counseling Center*

We have experienced two long years with 2020 and 2021. I remember when 2020 started. I thought the biggest part of my year was turning 40, having no idea I would experience events that would forever change our lives. Between the racial injustice, civil unrest, and the election, things were very dysregulated. Oh yeah, there was also that COVID-19 thing. During the year, and following into 2021, there was something that seemed very unsettling: a loss of control.

One of my main areas in counseling is anxiety. I tell my clients that a loss of control almost always leads to an increase in anxiety. We see this when we are driving, and we get anxious about the cars around us. Or, when our boss gives us an assignment we did not anticipate, and we must adjust our schedule. Maybe, we experience a rise in anxiety when there is a global pandemic, and we lose control over many aspects of our day-to-day life.

So, what happens when we lose control? Often, we fight like crazy to regain it. Maybe we become overly aggressive in driving. Maybe we take pride in adjusting our schedule and problem-solving. Maybe we have tried to live like nothing has happened during COVID times. No matter what our coping strategies are, when we feel that loss of control, we may experience anxiety, insecurity, anger, and disruptions to our healthy functioning.

So, as we go through 2022, I'll focus on ways we can reclaim some aspects of our lives as we live in a continuing and post COVID-19 disrupted world. I know some of us went back to business as normal as soon as we could. I know some of us are still sheltering in place as much as possible, avoiding restaurants, and social distancing. I know some of us are somewhere in-between those. So, let's talk about something we can control to start the year off with.

You have three things you can control: what you think, say, and do. Maybe during COVID, our thoughts have bordered on the catastrophic (everything will be terrible forever). It is helpful to reframe those thoughts into how things can be different, and what joy can I have. While I missed going to my office during 2020, I think about all the extra time I had with my kids. When I am frustrated with what things I am unable to do (I miss sitting in Starbucks), I can control enjoying my coffee outside. When I wanted to shout at people for having different opinions of me during elections, pandemics, and racial injustice, I focused my effort to control how I spoke to people so that I would not regret my words.

Even if COVID were to disappear from the world and never return, things will never be fully like they were. So, if we want to reclaim control, let us not focus on what we've lost, but on what we can think, say, and do. As we do that, it allows for a peace and hope of reclaiming other things. I look forward to enjoying a journey of reclaiming with you in 2022!

(Read this and other articles in this series here: <https://summitcounseling.org/reclaiming-2022-part-i-control/>)

"More than anything you guard, protect your mind, for life flows from it." – Proverbs 4:23 (CEB)

A Prayer for Today:

"Lord Jesus, I realize that I don't truly control much in this world. I also recognize that you are God, and I am not. Therefore, empower me, by your Holy Spirit, to control my thoughts, my words, and my actions so that all three will bring you glory and honor. In your name, I pray. Amen."

DAY 5

JANUARY 21

Dead Batteries Don't Do Anyone a Lot of Good.

Day 5 of Unleashing Hope Devotional

"Forget about Pushing" by Ray Johnston

I have a friend who once owned a 1947 Chrysler Windsor Highlander. The beast was more than a decade older than he was, but he liked the military blue with scotch plaid interior and the thick, chrome bumpers with, well, horns. Also, he thought its relatively simple engine would help him learn more about auto mechanics. Since my friend has, to put it generously, limited mechanical skills, you can probably guess how that turned out.

My friend didn't take out the behemoth very often, and he never worked under the hood. When his elderly parents came for a visit, he let his dad, Bob, drive it around town. For a week, Bob had a ball showing off. At a gas station, one older gentleman made a slow circle around the hulking monster and said, "Nice!"

"It's my son's," Bob said.

The man said, startled, "You mean . . . he lets you drive it?"

After his parents left, my friend took it out for a spin, running an errand some miles away. When he returned to the car and turned the ignition, nothing happened. He tried again. Silence. He popped the hood. The battery was dead. Totally, completely, dead. You probably don't know much about a 1947 Chrysler Windsor Highlander, but it's not going to be pushed very far. You'd be lucky to push it downhill. My stranded friend made a long, hot, uncomfortable hike out of the countryside to find a new battery. Why?

Dead batteries don't do anyone a lot of good. They'll cause a lot of frustration and anger, and they sure won't raise anyone's Hope Quotient. No matter how great the car, if my friend wanted to move forward, he needed a new battery.

A prayer for today:

"Lord, give me the wisdom to know that I can't do life on my own power. Fuel me with your power today so that I can live at my best."

DAY 6

JANUARY 22

Life Happens. Don't Go it Alone.

Adapted from Day 30 of Unleashing Hope Devotional

Terri was 15 when she committed her life to following Christ. Now that she knew Christ, she prayed that He would heal her family and bring her parents back together. Yet, two weeks later, her mom took her own life.

How could this happen? Terri was confused and in pain. She questioned God: Why didn't He stop her mom?

There is a saying, "Life happens." Every person reading these words has a place where life has been happening. It might be the loss of a job or the sudden passing of a loved one. Life happens. It might be a long battle with cancer or a lonely fight with depression. Life happens. It might be a marriage going south or kids going sideways. Life happens.

The most dangerous place to be when life happens is alone. And the easiest way to find yourself alone when life is hard is to be alone when life is not hard.

When life is easy, we think we have it handled and don't need Jesus or other people. But we need to line up our support when life is good, because challenges are surely coming. Right now is a great time to ask yourself: Who am I connected to? What group of people will God use to give me strength and courage when life happens to me?

Take a step toward hope: Reach out to at least two people today so that when life happens, you won't have to go it alone.

DAY 7

JANUARY 23

Take a Hope Inventory

Adapted from Unleashing Hope Digital Resource Guide

Take a minute to journal your answers to these questions. Sometimes just writing it out makes all the difference.

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, how stressed are you?
2. In one word, what's the main thing you have been thinking about lately?
3. What is one thing you could do to help alleviate some of your stress?
4. Are you surrounding yourself with people that drain you or build you up?

DAY 8

JANUARY 24

What is Your Family Thankful For?

The past few years have been a unique time for families. Parents were asked what they were thankful for in 2021, here are some of the responses from around the world:

- Community
- Grace
- Healthy kids
- New friends
- A new home
- Childcare availability
- Good health
- God's faithfulness
- Emotional growth
- Family
- A slow and simple lifestyle
- Resilient, happy kids
- Church family
- Kids' new school and their teachers
- In-person church
- Marriage
- Seeing the sunrise
- A warm cup of coffee
- To be alive and healthy

What are you thankful for? What are you hopeful for? What brings you hope and peace? This would be a great exercise to do with your kids as well. Helping them build gratitude will build hope.

DAY 9

JANUARY 25

Three Ways to Share Hope Today

Adapted from Unleashing Hope Digital Resource Guide

As you're working on refueling the hope in your own life, take the opportunity to unleash hope to other people in your family and community. Spoiler alert: doing this will help hope grow in your life too!

Here are three ways you can unleash hope today:

1. Buy a thank you card for someone who recently encouraged you and give it to them.
2. Pay for the customer behind you at a drive thru.
3. Use social media to encourage someone by leaving a comment or sharing your favorite post.

DAY 10

JANUARY 26

Faith and Mental Health

Adapted from [Faith and Mental Health a 5-Day Devotional](#)

From the moment Adam and Eve made the decision to stray away from God's intentional plans for life on earth, nothing has been the same. This includes our bodies and the illnesses that plague them. Let's be careful here. We are not suggesting that illnesses are God's way of punishing humans, but instead they are simply another reality of our living in a fallen world. Mental illness is not the fault of any one individual, but rather a disappointing reality for what it means to live life on this earth. Let's sit with that one a moment longer.

Mental illness is not a punishment. It is just one of the unfortunate consequences of suffering that comes along in this thing called life.

To accept this mindset requires certain deference and humility toward God, for it could be easy to stamp our feet and demand that it ought not to be so. We want to say, God should have done this or that! OR, how could God allow this thing to happen?! OR, God should have done better! But then, where would that get us? As Job learned, we are not God. And we cannot necessarily undo what has already been done.

If our purpose in life is to journey back to God and become fully human along the way, then, yes, we must oppose suffering at every opportunity, but to find ourselves stuck in an existential crisis over the nature of this existence is to miss the boat entirely. The point, as a follower of Jesus, is not to eradicate all suffering or even overcome suffering, but to endure it faithfully and with our hope firmly anchored to Christ. A stance like this makes it easier for me to swallow the reality of mental illness.

What helps most, however, is the image of Jesus Christ on the cross. The truth is that I'm not sure I could worship a God who hadn't tasted the bitterness of the kind of suffering we humans experience daily, especially those of us who suffer mentally. When I look at the cross I see a God so intent on loving and living with his people that he was willing to crawl into the deepest pit of suffering and anguish known to humanity so all people might know there is no darkness into which he will not give chase. In other words, on your darkest day . . . you are not alone.

"Jesus understands every weakness of ours, because he was tempted in every way that we are. But he did not sin!" – Hebrews 4:15 (CEV)

A Prayer for Today:

"Ever Present and faithful God, thank you that even when it doesn't feel like you are there . . . you are. Today, I give you thanks for always being with me, for never leaving me, and for coming to cast out the darkness. Jesus, I trust you. Amen."

DAY 11

JANUARY 27

A Mustard Seed of Faith

Day 9 of Unleashing Hope Devotional

"The people who stay steady in a storm have a real and genuine faith and know that the object of their faith is more important than the amount of their faith."

- Les Christie, Speaker and Youth Ministry Chair at William Jessup University

How much faith is enough? Once, Jesus was teaching His disciples how to live a life of trust and obedience to God, and when He finished, His disciples said, "Increase our faith!" Jesus reminds us that faith the size of a mustard seed will do. Mustard seeds are about the size of this "o," so His words teach us that the size of our faith is not the issue.

Faith is a key part of every movement of God. Faith energizes the people of God, activates the grace and power of God, strengthens the hearts of God's people and makes the church a partner in the plans of God. Without faith, we cannot please God. With faith, nothing is impossible.

Grandpa Pearson trusted God for more than 75 years. He influenced dozens of young men to enter the ministry and countless people to follow Christ. One Sunday, he was asked, "How did you acquire such great faith?" He responded, "Great faith? I don't have great faith. In fact, I only need enough faith to see what God can do, and once I see that, a mustard seed [of faith] is all He needs to do the impossible."

A prayer for today:

"Jesus, I give You my mustard seed of faith knowing that is all You need to do the impossible."

DAY 12

JANUARY 28

Live a Life of Passion

Day 18 of Unleashing Hope Devotional

"We have been raised in a world that is risk-averse, and this is not how people who know God were meant to be. We have somehow equated the Christian life with the safe life."

- Christine Caine, author, director and founder of The A21 Campaign, Thrive 2011

Passion comes when people find a reason to live that is larger than they are. The Bible is full of these people and the great deeds that sprang from their passion for God. Moses led his people through the wilderness. Joshua led them into the Promised Land. David stood against Goliath. Nehemiah built a wall around the city of God. Jeremiah preached. Daniel prayed. Esther rescued her people. Their lives became risky, but their impact was eternal.

Passion is the soil from which an astounding life grows because passion transforms an idea into a vision and a vision into action.

Jesus said He came to give us abundant life. He came to give us lives of passion! That passion means we pursue lives that overflow with God's goodness. We live for something greater than ourselves. We respond to God's invitation to let what is on His heart set our hearts on fire.

A prayer for today:

"Jesus, show me Your heart and set my heart on fire with what I see. Let me live a life larger than myself, fueled by passion."

DAY 13

JANUARY 29

Take a Hope Inventory

Adapted from Unleashing Hope Small Group Study Guide

Take a minute to journal your answers to these questions. Sometimes just writing it out makes all the difference.

No one does well when running on empty. Which of these five “Passion Killers” is the one that can exhaust your fuel supply and cause you to crash and burn?

1. Unhealthy People
2. Unkind Critics
3. Unbalanced Schedule
4. Unnecessary Guilt
5. Underestimating the Impact of Exposure (to a negative situation, people or things).

What is one thing you could do to help alleviate or avoid this passion killer?

DAY 14

JANUARY 30

How Can I Help My Child When They Are Emotional?

Written by: [Terrace Anderson, M.S.W.](#) - Summit Counseling Center

This is a question that many parents ask. When children are upset, adults often believe they can process and express how they feel. This is not always true; however, there are few tools that can begin to change the dynamic of how your child communicates when emotions are running high. Effective communication can be taught through modeling, support, and positive reinforcement.

The first thing you want to do is separate your emotions from what your child is currently experiencing. What is happening is not about you. Even if you are the source of conflict or their anger, take yourself out of the equation. Any emotions that you may feel in relation to the situation, please put them aside. Your support is needed, and you want to assist your child with understanding their feelings. Interjecting how you feel or what you want takes the focus off of your child and decreases the chances of them learning how to communicate effectively.

"Silence is GOLDEN"! There are moments that this phrase is perfect...this is one of them. When your child is visibly upset, angry, hurt, or annoyed. The first thing to do as a parent is to get quiet. You don't have to feel the pressure of having all the answers. Sit with your child in the silence and breathe. If they are standing or pacing, stand with them in silence. Let your posture match theirs for unspoken support. If your child does not mind physical touch, you can put your hand on their shoulder, arm, or their hand. This signifies to your child that you are there in the moment with them. It also teaches your child to take a moment to get quiet, to stop and think about how they are feeling.

Thirdly, utilize your expertise as their parent to break the silence. What would bring them comfort, if it was you what would comfort you (I say this because our children are more like us than we like to admit)? Give what you would want to receive. Treat others how you want to be treated. You can say, "do you want to talk about it", "is there something I can do", your tone should remain calm and your words should be few. No matter what they say, you as the parent should remain calm not out of fear that they will explode, but out of maturity being a voice of reason to bring them out of this moment to a place where they can talk and begin to calm down.

Next, if they don't want to talk about it, assure them that you are there for them. When they are ready, make time or check back in with them later for a chat. Don't push them into communicating but continue to reassure them that you are there for them. If your child chooses to talk, allow them to speak and you only listen. Use this as an opportunity to defer to them, asking what they think and how should they handle the situation. You want to utilize this time to build trust and a level of comfort with your child. Creating a non-judgmental environment. In addition to allowing them to learn in real-time how to communicate effectively.

Lastly, when and if you see this behavior in the future, remind them of their strengths and ability to handle the previous situation. Remember you don't have to feel the pressure of solving their problems for them. They just want to know someone cares, is willing to listen, and won't judge them.

DAY 15

JANUARY 31

Three Ways to Share Hope Today

Adapted from Unleashing Digital Resource Guide

As you're working on refueling the hope in your own life, take the opportunity to unleash hope to other people in your family and community. Spoiler alert: doing this will help hope grow in your life too!

Here are three ways you can unleash hope today:

1. At a restaurant, leave a generous tip, 30% or more, and write an encouraging note to the server and have the entire table sign it.
2. Send a note of encouragement to your child's teacher or a coworker.
3. If a parking space opens up, give the parking spot you want to someone else.

DAY 16

FEBRUARY 1

Who's in Your Corner?

Day 4 of Unleashing Hope Devotional

Who will help you up when you get down? Who will you go to when you feel run down, worn out, washed up, and hopeless?

No one who watched Eric Moussambani at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games will forget him.

The twenty-two-year-old from Equatorial Guinea learned to swim only a few months before the Games, and he practiced only in a twenty-meter pool. He had never raced more than fifty meters. Under a special program that encourages developing countries to participate even if their athletes don't meet customary standards, Eric was able to enter the one hundred meter men's freestyle. When the other two swimmers in his heat got disqualified because of false starts, he had to swim alone.

And that's when things got memorable.

An Associated Press report called his swimming style "charmingly inept." Eric never put his head under the water's surface. He flailed wildly just to stay afloat. Ten meters before the end of his race, Eric virtually came to a stop. Spectators feared he might drown. He'd already swam more than a minute too slow to move on to the next heat, yet the capacity crowd at the Olympic Aquatic Center stood to its feet and cheered, imploring Eric to finish. He finally reached the wall and clung to it. After regaining his composure, Moussambani said through an interpreter, "I want to send hugs and kisses to the crowd. It was their cheering that kept me going."

Who's in your corner? What kind of support do you have?

Take a step toward hope: Strengthen the relationships you have and focus on finding the ones you need.

DAY 17

FEBRUARY 2

The Power of Self-Stewardship

*Adapted and reprinted with permission from [Dr. Alice Hoag, Ed.D.](#)
The Summit Counseling Center*

Self-care has almost become an art on social media where one can find hedonistic ways of pleasuring one's body with massages, products, and procedures, as well as indulgent ways of pampering one's soul with romance, hobbies, and other pleasant pursuits. Yet practicing these forms of self-care can feel consumption-focused, which can lead to becoming self-absorbed and self-focused.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines stewardship as: "the conducting, supervising, or managing of something, especially the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care." When we talk about self-stewardship, it translates as taking care of oneself. Tending ourselves is our own responsibility. It is not healthy to impose this responsibility on another; asking another to be responsible for ourselves is called codependency. No one can learn for another, no one can develop a character trait for another, no one can feel someone else's emotions for them, no one can lose weight or exercise for another, and no one can fulfill someone else's dreams or goals for them. Self-stewardship is a task only individuals can do for themselves.

Self-stewardship also involves interacting with one's self with compassion and kindness. Self-compassion is a concept in which we treat ourselves (with both actions and words) as though we were our own best friend. Self-compassion is not narcissistic self-love. Self-compassion is the practice of treating one's self with kindness and comfort while maintaining accountability for continuous improvement in any area of life. Research shows that practicing self-compassion and self-kindness is much more productive than self-harshness or self-criticism. The latter two tend to deflate and de-motivate us while the former two tend to inspire us to improve our self-worth, our performance, and our relationships.

Self-compassion not only entails responding to one's self with kindness, support, and comfort, but also by accurately assessing and remedying any guilt, by assessing and releasing any shame, by setting limits or boundaries on one's self-talk, and by finding meaning in one's circumstances and experiences. By learning to live with self-compassion, individuals not only increase their sense of life satisfaction and personal well being, but their relationships tend to improve, their physical health improves, and they tend to perform better at most of their tasks. Self-compassion is a central element of effective self-stewardship, allowing individuals to choose to be their better selves, both for themselves and their relationships.

"You must love your neighbor in the same way you love yourself. You will never find a greater commandment than these." – Mark 12:31 (TPT)

A Prayer for Today:

Dear God, I pray for self-awareness today, please show me who you created me to be. Help me to love, understand, and accept myself, despite my flaws and mistakes. Show me how to love myself like you love me. In the name of Christ, I pray, Amen.

DAY 18

FEBRUARY 3

Three Ways to Share Hope Today

Adapted from Unleashing Digital Resource Guide

As you're working on refueling the hope in your own life, take the opportunity to unleash hope to other people in your family and community. Spoiler alert: doing this will help hope grow in your life too!

Here are three ways you can unleash hope today:

1. Make a list of three people you admire, write their qualities out, call or text them and share it with them.
2. Take a risk and deliver a plate of cookies to a neighbor you've never met.
3. Do a chore at home that someone else usually does.

DAY 19

FEBRUARY 4

Whose Voice are You Listening to?

Day 6 of Unleashing Hope Devotional

An experienced spelunker once invited his friend, Danny, to explore a cave with him. "Danny," he said, "I discovered this cave, but it's a little tough to get there. Would you like to come with me?" Danny, always open for a little adventure, agreed.

When they entered the cavern, the passageway got smaller and smaller and narrower and narrower. Pretty soon, they had to get down on all fours and crawl. To get through a small fissure in the rock, they had to lie on their backs, push with their legs, and keep their hands to their sides. To Danny's horror, the passageway grew so narrow that they could not breathe and move at the same time. When they took a breath, their lungs expanded and filled the tiny space in the cave, causing them to get stuck. So they had to breathe out in order to move forward. Breathe in, get stuck; breathe out, push with the legs, move a tiny bit forward. How's that for claustrophobia? Danny started to 'lose it.' "I am going to die in this cave!" he thought. "I can't go forward. I can't go back. I'm stuck!"

At that moment in the darkness, Danny's friend called out to him, "Danny, this is really important. If you keep listening to those voices in your head—if you let your mind run wild—you will flip out. And if you flip out, you will get stuck in this cave. I want you to listen only to my voice right now. Danny, I have been through this, and I am here right now. I won't leave you. You can trust me. Danny, you can make it. You just have to keep listening, every moment, to my voice."

To what voice are you listening? Jesus says, "Keep listening to my voice. I know you're in a cave. Don't listen to the voices that tell you it's too late for you, that you should give up hope or that you should settle. Stop listening to your doubts and fears. You can trust me. I will not leave you. I am with you always."

Take a step toward hope: Whose voice are you listening to today? Who or what is speaking loudest to you? Is this a helpful voice?

DAY 20

FEBRUARY 5

Parenting: Using Encouragement Over Praise

Written by: [Maddie McGarrah, M.Ed.](#) - Summit Counseling Center

When your child gets a good grade, figures out how to do something, or completes something we often respond with praise such as "Great job!", "Excellent", "Way to get an A on that!". This is defined as praise. While praise can be boosting for a child's self-esteem in the moment, it doesn't help them long-term. What can be even more helpful is starting to use encouragement over praise.

Encouragement is when our communication focuses on the process and details of what your child is doing rather than the outcome. Using the same example of your child getting a good grade, an example of encouragement is "You worked so hard on that!". It is important to use encouragement when your child is in the middle of trying to do something and using statements such as "That is a really hard set to put together, but you're not giving up", "I know you can figure this out", "Look at all the detail and colors you put into your drawing of a flower!".

The reason why we want to use encouragement more often than praise is that encouragement is internally motivating (It's good because I think it's good) whereas praise is externally motivating (It's good because mom/dad says it's good). This can lead to a child's efforts or their successes to be dependent on the praise that follows rather than being motivated themselves to try and do something.

By using encouragement more often than praise, it can lead to your child working hard on things because they are wanting to and are not afraid to try again when they don't get it the first time. It builds confidence and persistence. To help build your child's self-esteem we must let them receive the message that they are capable even when they don't get something the first time. Thus, it is important to let your child struggle and give them encouragement with something you know that they can figure out. Using encouragement shows your faith and acceptance in your child's abilities and will boost their self-esteem in the long run!

DAY 21

FEBRUARY 6

Hope Initiates. Hope Activates.

Day 2 of Unleashing Hope Devotionals

"Will It Float?" by Ray Johnston

David Letterman used to do an ingenious shtick called "Will It Float?" One time, it inspired me to fill a huge water tank, place it at the front of an auditorium, and ask 3,000 people to vote which of a series of items would float. We collected a bunch of unusual objects: an egg, a can of Spam, a gallon of milk, a Shaq bobblehead and a five-pound bag of flour. It was pretty funny.

After everyone voted, we threw in the objects one by one and then asked everyone to stare at the tank to see what would happen.

- The egg: *floated*.
- Spam: *sunk*.
- Gallon of milk: *floated*.
- Shaq bobblehead: *the body sank but the head floated*.
- Five-pound bag of flour: *just fell apart and turned the whole tank white*.

I turned to the audience after the results came in and said, "Nobody does well in marriage, in relationships, at work, psychologically or in life in general if they're not buoyant. Getting down is part of life. Staying down is what will kill you. If any Christian tells you he's never been discouraged, he's lying. All of us are going to get down." Then I added, "You're going to get down this year. It's just going to happen. You may be there right now. But if you stay down, your education doesn't matter, your theology doesn't matter, your skill level doesn't matter and your financial backing doesn't matter. If you get down and stay down, you will drown."

The only thing that will keep you from drowning is hope. Hope makes you buoyant. Hope liberates. Hope motivates.

Hope initiates. Hope activates. That's why hope is so important.

He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

- Psalm 23:3

A prayer for today:

"Lord, by Your grace, lift me up so that I can experience the hope only found in You."

DAY 22

FEBRUARY 7

Our Mind is Our Biggest Battlefield

Adapted from [Fighting for Mental and Emotional Health](#)

Did you know experts estimate that we have anywhere between 50,000 to 80,000 thoughts a day? Here's a question to consider. Have you ever thought about what you are thinking about? If left unchecked, our thoughts dictate our lives. Thoughts have the power to bring anxiety, stress, worry, sadness, and fear into our hearts. They also have the power to produce peace, joy, gratitude, love and freedom in our lives. It is our choice.

I have good news—you do not have to keep the negative and oppressive thoughts in your mind. You can throw them out! In fact, God wants us to throw those thoughts to Him.

1 Peter 5:7 says, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." Why would Scripture encourage us to cast our anxiety, cares, and worries onto God if He didn't expect us to have them in the first place? God created the human heart to cast its cares upon Him, not to try and carry them on our own.

There is an anonymous saying that goes like this: "The greatest battles you will ever fight in your life are between your ears." It is true, our mind is often our biggest battlefield.

When we cast our cares on the Lord through prayer, the peace of God will guard our heart and mind. For me, it is a daily, sometimes hourly, decision to cast my cares on my Savior.

We can fight for our minds daily. Do not think about the whole month or year ahead of you, think about this very day. Focus on winning the battle in your mind today. OK, focus on winning the battle in your mind, right now. Fight for thoughts that are positive and align with what God says about you in His word today. Take captive the negative and shameful thoughts the enemy attacks you with today.

Focus on fighting for mental and emotional health in your mind one day at a time—starting now!

“And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.” – Philippians 4:8 (NLT)

A Prayer for Today:

Loving God, right now I cast all my cares, worries, and anxieties onto you. I lay them down at your feet and pick up your peace, joy, and hope. Teach me how to take my thoughts captive and think on things that are excellent and praiseworthy! In Jesus' Name. Amen.”

DAY 23

FEBRUARY 8

Three Ways to Share Hope Today

Adapted from Unleashing Digital Resource Guide

As you're working on refueling the hope in your own life, take the opportunity to unleash hope to other people in your family and community. Spoiler alert: doing this will help hope grow in your life too!

Here are three ways you can unleash hope today:

1. Prepare a meal for a homeless person.
2. Introduce yourself to someone you always see around.
3. Visit a nursing home. Spend time visiting with someone who doesn't get visitors.

DAY 24

FEBRUARY 9

Praying with Anticipation

Day 14 of Unleashing Hope Devotional

"Never give away a higher eternal perspective to a temporary pain. Sometimes you have to PUSH: Pray Until Something Happens."

- Darren Laws, pastor of Bay City Church, San Ramon, CA

Few activities can recharge our souls like prayer, and few situations can drain our souls like waiting for a prayer to be answered. So Jesus told His disciples a story to help them understand that they should always pray and not give up. The story was about a widow who kept on coming and coming and coming until a judge finally gave in. Jesus said that, if a tough old judge can be reached by repeated requests, imagine how much more our loving Father can be reached by our requests.

One way to not lose heart is to pray with anticipation, not expectation. Expectation is like making a Christmas list, giving it to someone and waiting for it to be filled. If it isn't, we become disappointed. Anticipation is saying, "I know that you love me, know me and want to bless me this Christmas. I cannot wait to see what you will do." Expectation has its eyes on the outcome. Anticipation has its eyes on the giver of gifts.

When we pray with expectation, we have an intended outcome in mind. We know what we expect God to do. When He does what we expect, we are excited. When He doesn't, we lose heart.

Try praying with anticipation. Praying with anticipation says, "God, I know You care. I trust that You will respond from Your wisdom and grace. I anticipate Your acting."

A prayer for today:

"Jesus, today I will trust that You know the best time to answer my prayer and the best way to answer my prayers. I will anticipate Your response and not lose heart."

DAY 25

FEBRUARY 10

Confidence is Key

Day 25 of Unleashing Hope Devotional

While we all know that Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, how many of us know what he had in his pockets when he was shot at Ford's Theater on April 14, 1865? It's an interesting list.

He had a handkerchief embroidered with "A. Lincoln." He had a country boy's penknife, a spectacle case held together with string and a Confederate five-dollar bill. He also had newspaper clippings that included quotes saying he was one of the greatest men ever to live.

Lincoln deserved the accolades. His courageous leadership saved the nation. But he was a quiet man, not known for braggadocio. Why carry around newspaper clippings talking about how great he was?

Historians say he kept the clips in his pockets to bolster his confidence at a time when critics abounded.

Take a step toward hope: What is in our pockets? If one of history's great figures carried tokens of confidence with him, what do we carry as we deal with feelings of guilt and inadequacy and worry about hard times?

DAY 26

FEBRUARY 11

H.O.P.E. in Parenting

Hope is one of those words that evokes....hope, promise, possibility, trusting something to completion, believing against all odds.

Sometimes hope is something that you grasp hold of in the darkest or most challenging of times. Sometimes hope is what you cling to when you know something may not work out. Sometimes hope is that thing that keeps you moving forward and putting one foot in front of the other.

As you think of Unleashing Hope in this season, and as you help your children think of how to find hope in their own lives, we want to give you an acronym to remember:

H: *Hanging on to the promises of God*

Hope comes from believing in the promises of God.

O: *Overcoming Adversity*

How do we teach ourselves or our children how to hang onto help in the midst of adversity?

P: *Pursing Truth*

Hebrews 11:1, NLT: "Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see." As we open God's word, we will find God's truth.

E: *Enduring Patiently*

Endure patiently as you FOCUS. Who or what has your focus? Are you focused on your kids? Parents? Work? Or is your focus on God?

Endure patiently as you PRAY. Spend time with the Father.

DAY 27

FEBRUARY 12

Knowing God's Will

Day 19 of Unleashing Hope Devotional

"People are always trying to find a will for their life, even if it is not God's."

- Chris Brown, teaching pastor at North Coast Church, Vista, CA

He was a mercenary for his religion, arresting, beating and killing those who disagreed. One day he met Christ, and the course of human history changed. Saul became Paul, wrote 13 books in the New Testament, was the first missionary to Europe and started numerous churches.

He murdered a man and hid his body but was found out, so he ran away into the desert. After he spent 40 years in exile, trying and failing to put the past behind him, God appeared to him in a burning bush. God said he needed the man to tell the Pharaoh, "Let my people go." Then the man had to take God's people to the Promised Land. Moses wrote five books of the Bible and is one of the most prominent figures in history.

Like Paul and Moses, we often have our own plans, and they may be at cross purposes with God's. Even when we try to discern God's plans, He knows them, and, truth be told, very often we do not. God's plans are often the fruit of a relationship with us, not the sort of linear plan that we prefer.

Knowing God's will is about knowing God more than it is about knowing what the next step might be. The better we know Him, the more His will unfolds. The better we know Him, the more we find the courage and wisdom to do His will.

'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.' - Jeremiah 29:11-12

A prayer for today: "Jesus, You know what You have planned for my life. Help me know You so that I have the courage to live out Your plans."

DAY 28

FEBRUARY 13

Managing Stress and Anxiety

*Reprinted with permission from [Maddie McGarrah, M.Ed.](#)
The Summit Counseling Center*

As I am sure we have all felt, the past months have brought on multiple stressors. In dealing with the global pandemic, working from home, your child's school schedule changing, an economic depression, racial injustice, and many more, it is not surprising that your stress and anxiety levels are heightened. I keep telling many of my clients, "I would be worried if you weren't stressed out or anxious about what is going on as what is happening in our world is something we have not faced before and thus is stressful and anxiety provoking."

Here are some tips that can help you manage your stress and anxiety:

- **Identify** – See if you can identify what might be causing you either stress or anxiety. There can be many sources of stress or anxiety. Some sources could be your work, interpersonal conflict, finances, isolation, discrimination, unexpected changes, or anticipation of a future event you are unsure of how it might turn out. Identifying things that may be causing you stress or anxiety and naming it will help you be able to see how to address it.
- **Control** – Recognize what is inside and outside of your control, or even what part of a situation is in your control. Anxiety is often what we feel when we are faced with an uncertain outcome or something we cannot control. It is important to recognize what is inside your control and to focus on addressing that rather than what is outside of your control.
- **Prioritize** – Is there anything you have on your plate that you can eliminate? Make sure you are not overloading yourself. Then look at what you have going and create a schedule to get things done, starting with what is the most pressing.
- **Boundaries** – Give yourself permission to say "no" to things when you are feeling overwhelmed to give more time for yourself or to work on things you need to get done.

- **Deep Breathing** – When feeling physically anxious or like your thoughts are getting out of control, engage in a deep breathing exercise such as Progressive Muscle Relaxation. Find a script for progressive muscle relaxation and allow yourself 5 minutes to engage in this when feeling overly anxious or stressed to bring yourself back to baseline and ready to tackle the stressor.
- **Self-Care** – Make time for the things you enjoy and celebrate what you have accomplished.
- **Seek Help** – If things are getting too tough and nothing seems to be working, seek out a trusted family member, partner, friend or professional to talk through what you are experiencing. You are not alone!
- **Grace** – Have grace for yourself, we are living in a stressful time and it is okay if you don't feel like you have it all together, you'll get there. Take it one day at a time.

"That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?" – Matthew 6:25-27 (NLT)

A Prayer for Today:

God, it's so easy to get caught up in worrying about what's going to happen tomorrow and the next day and the next. Help me to trust You when worries surface in my life.

DAY 29

FEBRUARY 14

Take a Hope Inventory

Adapted from Unleashing Hope Small Group Study Guide

Take a minute to journal your answers to these questions. Sometimes just writing it out makes all the difference!

When discouragement, bitterness, resentment and anxiety enter, hope exits every time: Which of the “Hope Killers” do you combat?

1. Bitterness and Resentment
2. Worry and Anxiety
3. Looking Back and Comparing
4. Guilt
5. Past Failures

What is one thing you could do to help alleviate or avoid this hope killer?

DAY 30

FEBRUARY 15

7 Factors That Impact Hope

Adapted from Unleashing Hope Small Group Study Guide

Factor 1: Recharge your batteries. Nobody does well running on empty.

Factor 2: Raise your expectations. You don't get what you deserve; you get what you expect.

Factor 3: Refocus on the future. It's time to throw away your review mirror. No one goes forward well when they are looking back.

Factor 4: Play to your strengths. Be yourself; everyone else is taken.

Factor 5: Refuse to go it alone. Never underestimate the power of support. Even the Lone Ranger had Tonto.

Factor 6: Replace burnout with balance. Burning the candle at both ends isn't as bright as you think.

Factor 7: Play great defense. Avoid the things that kill your hope.

