

Center for Innovative Practices

Resiliency Tool Kit: Resource #6

Hope and Optimism

“No person has the right to rain on your dreams.” Marian Wright Edelman

Purpose: This practice tool is designed to help organizations and providers foster hope in youth and young adults.

Definition of “Hope and Optimism” (Resiliency Leadership Ohio):

Resiliency is an ordinary process that is available and expected for all youth. All children have the right to hope and success starting at birth and lasting a lifetime. Communities, providers, and families foster opportunities and possibilities so that youth with emotional challenges have hope for a positive future with a self-determined and fulfilled life. We believe that even the smallest victories are significant, sustaining our hope, and giving us the courage to persevere.

Promoting hope for youth, young adults, and family

- **Perspective matters:** Hope begins with you. Explore your feelings about resiliency and significant mental health challenges. Do you believe that youth and young adults with complex emotional challenges can be successful? To what extent?
 - Think possibilities, potentials, and opportunities.
- **Language matters.** Be thoughtful of your language. Use language that conveys expectations for a positive future.
 - “When” not “if” language: *“Don’t say if I graduate or if I get a job— say when I graduate and when I get a job.” Youth, Resiliency Leadership Ohio*
 - Utilize language that conveys possibilities, such as: “What would it take;” instead of language that conveys hopelessness, such as listing the youth’s limitations based on mental health condition or past behaviors.

Hope and Optimism Resource Tool #1: Future’s Orientation

Use **solution-focused questions** to explore a positive vision of the youth/young adult/family’s future.

- What are your life goals? Career goals?
- If things go as planned, where do you see yourself in one year, five years, ten years?
- What job/career will you have or be working toward?
- What will success look like?
- What would you be most proud of accomplishing?
- Who would be most surprised of your accomplishments?
- Who would be most proud of you?
- What are the first steps in getting started in reaching your goal(s)? (Explore careers, talk with someone who has a similar job, etc.)

Hope and Optimism Resource Tool #2: Incremental Success

"Little victories are significant, sustaining our hope, and giving us the courage to persevere."

Parent, Resiliency Leadership Ohio

Directions: Hope is built on a foundation of small successes. Based on the life goals identified in the future's orientation exercise, partner with the youth/young adult/family member to develop stepwise goals and timeframes to achieve them. Work with youth/young adult/family member to design goals/steps that are achievable, flexible, supported, and incremental.

"Make a goal so that I can reach and once I reach it then you can raise it."

Youth, Resiliency Leadership Ohio

- What major steps do you need to take to accomplish your goal(s)?
- What is your timeframe for achieving your goal?
- What are the first steps you need to take to get started in reaching this goal?
- What is achievable now?
- What would keep you from getting started?
- Make a list of potential barriers in reaching your goal?
- Brainstorm possible solutions to each barrier.
- Who is available to support you in working toward your goals?
- What supports do you need to accomplish this goal?
- Success needs to be acknowledged. Celebrate small successes.
- Help youth develop a "resume" of their achievements

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