

Teaching Positivity

Inspiring Hope in Our Students...and Ourselves

Peggy Rakas

Midwest Clinic - Dec. 19, 2025

[Google Presentation Slides](#)

[Hope Worksheets for Teachers and Students](#)

[Funny and Inspiring Posters for the Classroom](#)

[Breathing and Gratitude Warm-ups - Rakas](#)



[Link to the Handout](#)

BIG IDEAS

- Why Should We Study Hope?
- How Do We Get More Hopeful?
- Positive Psychology Hope Toolbox
 - Gratitude Practices
 - Breathing Practices
 - Rakas Positive Psychology Playlist
 - Making Hope Happen - Goals, Agency and Pathways.
 - WOOP- Wish, Outcome, Obstacles, Plan
 - Growth Mindset and The Power of One Tiny Habit
 - The Power of Self-Talk - Develop Agency with Anxiety Reappraisal and Distant Self-Talk
 - Reframe Mistakes as Opportunities to Grow
 - Cultivating Moments of Awe
 - Hope Worksheets for Students and Teachers
- One of the Secrets to Master Teaching

What is Hope?

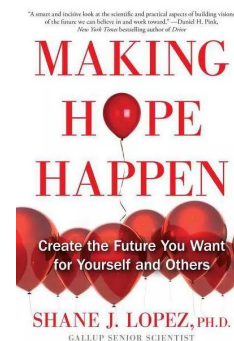
- **Optimism** is the belief that our future will be better than our present
- **Hope** is the belief that our future will be better than our present, and we have the power to make it so
- **Hope is an action verb**

"No matter how dark things might seem - there's always a glimmer of hope if we keep moving forward and taking action."

Jane Goodall

- [Making Hope Happen - Shane Lopez](#)

The hopeful believe that the future will be better than the present, and I have the power to make it so



Teaching Positivity

Why Study Hope?

- In a Gallup poll of 10,000 workers, the most powerful question asked was about hope: 69% of those who strongly agreed that their leaders made them “feel enthusiastic about the future” were engaged. Only 1% of those who disagreed with the statement were engaged ([Rath and Conchie, 2005 -2008](#))
- Hope predicts academic achievement more effectively than intelligence, personality, or prior achievement.
[Hope Uniquely Predicts Objective Academic Achievement](#) Day, Hansen et al. - 2010

Teachers need to ask themselves, “Am I inspiring hope?”

How Do We Get More Hopeful?

Use Tools from the Positive Psychology Hope Toolbox

- **Gratitude**

- Why does Gratitude increase our hope?
When people practice gratitude and become more grateful and happier, they begin to see that they played a role in creating that positive change. This strengthens their belief that they can influence what happens in their lives. When we recognize that our actions affect outcomes, we develop our sense of agency, our belief that we can make things happen, and as a result, we become more hopeful.
- [The How of Happiness](#) - Sonia Lyubomirsky
The number 1 Happiness activity is expressing gratitude.
- Practicing gratitude makes you better equipped to handle what comes your way with a hopeful spirit. [Gratitude Predicts Hope and Happiness Witvliet et. al., 2018](#)
- [Thanks](#) - Robert Emmons
 - “Gratitude is literally one of the few things that can measurably change people’s lives.”
 - Ten weeks of a nightly practice of writing 3 - 5 things you are grateful for resulted in a 25% increase in happiness.
- [Take a 2-minute Gratitude Break](#)
Use the [Live Jelly Cam - Monterey Bay Aquarium](#) for fabulous meditative music and visuals.
- Create a Gratitude Mantra - It could be as simple as “Thank You” in any language.
Or my personal favorite - “Lettuce Rejoice”
- Use a light touch, like a butterfly.



Teaching Positivity

● Breathing and Gratitude Practices

- [Physiological Sigh](#) or Cyclic Sighs
for profound anxiety relief - from [Huberman Labs](#)
Two inhales, followed by an extended exhale.
The second inhale is fast and deep.
- [Rakas Breathing and Gratitude Warm-ups for Musicians](#)
- [Rakas Positive Psychology MakeMusic Playlist](#)



● Goals, Agency, and Pathways

- [The Psychology of Hope - Rick Snyder](#)
"You Can Get There From Here"



● WOOP- Wish, Outcome, Obstacles, Plan

- [Rethinking Positive Thinking](#) - Gabrielle Oettingen
- Get materials for you and your students at [WOOP My Life](#)
Wish Outcome Obstacle Plan



● Growth Mindset and The Power of One Tiny Habit

- [Michael Merzenich on Growth Mindset](#) starts at 11:33
From the Learner Lab with Trevor Ragan

Whatever you think your limits are, you're wrong
Whatever you think your students' limits are, you're wrong

- [The Powerful YET Sign](#)
- [Atomic Habits](#) by James Clear

YET

● Reframe Mistakes as an Opportunity to Grow

● The Power of Self-Talk

- "Don't listen to yourself. Talk to yourself." Darrin Donnelly [The Mental Game](#)
- **Anxiety Reappraisal**
 - Replace "I'm afraid" with "I'm excited" for greater success ([A. W. Brooks, 2016](#))
- **Distant Self-Talk**
 - Speaking in the second or third person has been researched as an effective tool to help with motivation *and confidence*. More powerful than "I'm excited" is "You're excited!" ([Kross et al., 2014](#)), or say

"(Your name), you're excited!"

Teaching Positivity

- [The Power of Awe](#)
- [Hope Worksheets for Students and Teachers](#)

Rakas Collected Resources

[Rakas Positive Psychology Resources](#)

[Rakas Positive Psychology Studies for Educators](#)

[Brian Johnson Philosophers' Notes Book Summaries](#)

[Collected by Peggy Rakas](#)

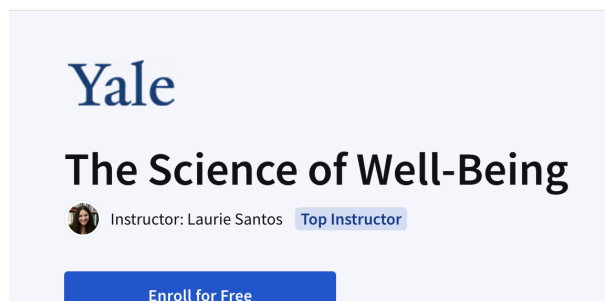
Shared with permission

And more at TeachingPositivity.com

Online Inspiration

- **Enroll in the free Yale Coursera Courses**
[The Science of Well-being with Dr. Laurie Santos](#) or
[The Science of Well-Being for Teens](#)

coursera



- **Listen to positive psychology podcasts**
[Happiness Lab](#) - Dr. Laurie Santos
[Build the Life You Want](#) - Oprah Winfrey and Arthur Brooks

HOPE WORKSHEET FOR TEACHERS

- What are some highlights from your teaching so far this year?
- What's working in your class right now?
- What are some of the most challenging aspects of your teaching?
- What's not working in your class right now?

"When your goals are informed by the things you've struggled with, those goals take on a richness of meaning."

Mel Robbins

Continued on the next page ...

Teaching Positivity

GOAL SETTING FOR YOUR CLASSROOM

Inspired by Gabrielle Ottengin, Rick Snyder, and Shane Lopez

A goal is any desired outcome that wouldn't otherwise happen without you doing something.
Let your successes and struggles guide your specific classroom goal.

GOAL - Pick ONE GOAL for your classroom that you want to work on.
Choose something that matters to you.

OUTCOME - Close your eyes and imagine the best outcome.
Imagine it fully. Summarize it in 3 to 6 words.

What excites you about the outcome you want to create?

OBSTACLES - What obstacles are in your way?

*"Your challenges are
trying to teach you something."
Mel Robbins*

PLAN - Make an if-then plan for your goal.
If plan A is not working, make plan B.
Make plans A-Z if needed.

FAITHFUL
ATTEMPTS
IN
LEARNING

If _____ Then _____

*"A goal without a plan is just a wish."
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry*

WHEN CAN YOU IMPLEMENT YOUR PLAN?

KNOW YOU CAN DO IT - Say aloud or to yourself:

"You can do this!"

Speaking in the second or third person has been researched as an effective tool
to help with motivation *and confidence*.



Continued on the next page...

Teaching Positivity

MAKE A TINY NEW HABIT TO SUPPORT YOUR PLAN

What is one little daily habit you could start to support your plan?

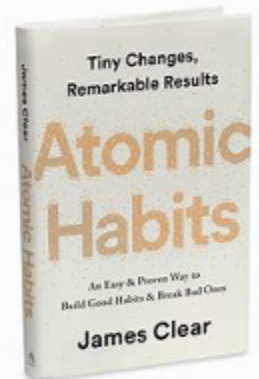
Is there a way to make that little habit even smaller?

Now, think silly-small habits that can be done in 2 minutes or less.

Perhaps you can JUST SHOW UP 😊

What is your ridiculously small new habit?

When will you do it each day? Attach it to a habit you already have.



CONGRATULATIONS!

YOU just made your habit so small that it is almost impossible to fail!

*Remind yourself daily of the teacher you want to be,
and know that your new habit will support you!*

*And remember, we are all human,
so.... when you fail,
say "Oh Well" and start again.*



YET