

THE BIG IDEAS

What Is Hope?

vs. Fantasizing vs. dwelling.

Here to There

Goals + agency + pathways.

Futurecasting

How awesome is your life in 5 years?

What Are Your Sirens?

+ Odysseus contracts.

When/Where Plans

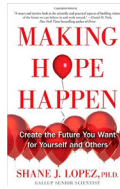
How are yours?

Plan A to Z

Pathways + optionality = wise.

Leadership

Got Hope? --> 1% vs. 69%.



Making Hope Happen

Create the Future You Want for Yourself and Others

BY SHANE J. LOPEZ PH.D. · ATRIA BOOKS © 2014 · 272 PAGES

“Through my work with John, I realized that how we think about the future—*how we hope*—determines how well we live our lives. John’s transformations, from thriving to suffering and back to thriving, were simple and compelling. When he had clear hopes for the future, his life was good. When John had a sudden break with the future, he felt his life was not worth living. As John reconnected to a meaningful future, his life became good again, and he was excited about it. And his health mysteriously stabilized.

Since the day I have met John, I have studied hope, both in my clinical work and in my research. Every client that followed John benefited from what he taught me—that our relationship with the future determines how well we live today. I asked my clients new and different questions, starting with ‘How hopeful are you about your future?’ I changed the way I opened my first session with them. ‘How can I help you today?’ became ‘If therapy is successful now, what will your life look like in five years?’ I didn’t see clients as broken in the way I once had; I wasn’t trying to fix them anymore. I was doing everything I could to help them be better students, partners, or patients so that they could realize bigger goals in their lives.”

~ Shane J. Lopez Ph.D. from *Making Hope Happen*

Hope.

Science says: It’s huge.

And, [Shane Lopez](#) is THE leading researcher studying the science of hope.

In this great book, he walks us through the inspiring power of hope and how we can cultivate it for ourselves and others in our lives. (Get the book [here](#).)

The book is packed with Big Ideas and I’m excited to share a few of my favorites so let’s jump straight in!

P.S. Before we do that, quick question to get your hope muscles warmed up: Imagine your life in 5 years. All your hard work pays off and your life is amazing. What’s it like?

FANTASIZING VS. DWELLING VS. HOPE

“Every day for a week, in fifteen-minute stretches, I wrote down my thoughts about the future. This gave me a snapshot of my future thinking, which fell into three categories. Sometimes I was *fantasizing*, I had big thoughts that were pure fun and entertainment about a fast convertible, next summer’s vacation, or retirement on the beach. These gave me a quick high—sometimes followed by a bit of a low. At other times I was *dwelling*: I hyperfocused my future thoughts on the bad things that might happen, such as struggling to get a job, taking thirty years to pay off my student loans, or never being able to retire. These made me anxious. And sometimes my thoughts balanced fantasizing and dwelling, which were exciting thoughts about my future even

“It is much discussed and celebrated, and it is somewhat important at school and in the workplace, but a high IQ is not essential to a good life. However, hope is like oxygen. As I saw then and continue to see every day, we can’t live without hope.”

~ Shane J. Lopez Ph.D.

" Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

~ Robert F. Kennedy

while I acknowledged the challenges before me. That's when I was hoping.

Hoping felt different than the other types of future thinking. When hoping, I felt compelled to act. Hope came along with a whole rush of plans for moving toward that future."

Alright. Let's start by differentiating three different ways we can think about the future: *fantasizing, dwelling* and *hoping*.

Fantasizing = Pure big shiny awesome. It's all (unrealistically) perfect kinda thing.

Dwelling = All the things that can go wrong. It all kinda (unrealistically) sucks.

HOPING = Combining the best of those—we're fired up about an exciting future AND we're aware of the inherent challenges to making that future a reality.

You may notice that sounds an awful lot like [Gabriele Oettingen's](#) Mental Contrasting process from her great book [Rethinking Positive Thinking](#) (see Notes). That's because it IS a lot like that. In fact, Shane talks about the power of Gabriele's research. More on that in a moment...

For now, how are you spending most of your future thinking these days?

Fantasizing? Dwelling? Or hoping?

What's one little thing you can do to optimize?

GETTING FROM HERE TO THERE (VIA GOALS + AGENCY + PATHWAYS)

"'You can get there from here.' That favorite saying of Rick [Snyder]'s has become one of mine, too. It's shorthand for a potent way of thinking about the future. 'Here' is the present, which is in some way less desirable than our imagined future. 'There' is the target of our longing. And 'you' are the one moving yourself from here to there. We expect something from the future, and also from ourselves.

In our minds, our beliefs firm up links between ourselves and the future, priming people for hope. People do this by setting high expectations about the future (somewhat tempered by reality) and then acting on them.

The hopeful share core beliefs that set them apart from others. Two of them are:

- The future will be better than the present.
- I have the power to make it so."

Now it's time to dive into the fun nitty gritty a bit more.

First: The whole idea of hope is focused on the phrase Shane's mentor Rick Snyder used: "You can get there from here." (Note coming soon on Rick's book *The Psychology of Hope*.)

→ "You can get there from here."

Later in the chapter, Shane walks us through the three primary aspects of making that happen. Here they are:

1. **Goals.** You need to have a future "there" that fires you up!
2. **Agency.** You need to believe that you have the power to make that future a reality.
3. **Pathways.** You need to know that there are a bunch of ways to reach your goal (aka to go from "here to there" and that none of those paths will be free of obstacles.

Goals. Agency. Pathways.

That's hope in a nutshell. I'm really excited to create a Micro Class showing this visually. Check that out here!

" Hopeful people believe: There are many paths to my goals. None of them is free of obstacles."

~ Shane J. Lopez Ph.D.

For now: KNOW two things:

1. Your future will be better than your present.
2. You have the power to make it so.

That hope/*knowing* is extraordinarily (!) powerful.

FUTURECASTING: WHAT GOAL ARE YOU MOST EXCITED ABOUT?

“Hope is created moment to moment through our deliberate choices. It happens when we use our thoughts and feelings to temper our aversion to loss and actively pursue what is possible. When we choose hope, we define what matters to us most.”

~ Shane J. Lopez Ph.D.

“If time machines existed, I would buy a fast one with a preview screen that shows what is happening where I’m planning to visit; I want to land on the right side of history and out of harm’s way. But until Old Doc Brown works out the bugs in his DeLorean’s flux capacitor, our bodies are grounded in the present. So we have to rely on the next-best thing—our capacity to travel back in time and into the future in our mind. Futurecasting—how well we can preview the future—is *the* fundamental skill for making hope happen.”

I love paying attention to the subtle things like the little italicized “the” in that last sentence.

Let’s take a closer look: “Futurecasting—how well we can preview the future—is *the* fundamental skill for making hope happen.”

I’ll repeat it with my own emphasis just to make sure we both capture the power of that:

“Futurecasting—how well we can preview the future—is **THE** fundamental skill for making hope happen.”

OK. I think I get it now. If we want to cultivate hope we **MUST** cultivate our ability to see a future that fires us up.

Let’s give our futurecasting muscles a little workout, shall we?

What are you excited about right now? What future of awesome are you creating? Can you see it? Write down your goals. Take a moment to see your #1 wish coming to fruition. You put in the hard work and it all comes together. How does your life change? What benefits do you experience? See it. Feel it.

Flex your futurecasting muscles.

Remember (!) that cultivating the ability to preview the future is **THE** fundamental skill for making hope happen.

P.S. Any *Back to the Future* references makes me smile. I so wanted that DeLorean. Hah. Go Marty go!! :)

WHAT ARE YOUR SIRENS? (+ ODYSSEUS CONTRACTS)

“Circe, a goddess and sorcerer, had kept Odysseus and his crew on her enchanted island for an entire year. But now, as her parting gift, she told him that the Sirens tailored their songs to each voyager, preying on his unique weaknesses and selfish tendencies. ‘The Greek gods knew we are our own worst enemies,’ Stan said. ‘So Circe told Odysseus exactly what to do.’ ...”

Analyzing Odysseus’s strategy to help us resist or defeat our modern Sirens is not as simple as tying yourself to a mast—even if you had one handy. I came up with the following precommitment rules for modern voyagers:

Know who or what your Sirens are and how they will tempt you. You may have Sirens or temptations specific to each and every goal you set. You may have weaknesses that undermine most of your efforts at change. Some common ones: (1) You don’t set enough time to pursue your personal goals, and (2) You’re easily distracted, so that no goal gets the focused attention it needs. Tailor your contract or strategy to avoid these temptations.”

This is awesome.

Did you know that the Sirens tailored their seductive songs for each voyager's weaknesses?

That's the first I've heard of that but I absolutely LOVE it.

In our Master Class series I keep on coming back to what I've been calling your "kryptonite."
Sirens = the same thing.

We ALL (!) have little (or big) weaknesses. A spectrum of slightly sub-optimal → seriously stupid things we do when our willpower is depleted and we're a little tired/stressed/wobbly.

It's *REALLY* important that we identify these weaknesses so we can create some pre-commitments with ourselves so we don't drive the ship right into the rocks!

So, what are *yours*?

What songs do those seductive Sirens whisper in YOUR ear?

This is worth reflecting on and writing down.

These are some of the sweet melodies Sirens sing to me:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(btw: In his new book [Originals](#) (Note soon), [Adam Grant](#) tells us that you'd feel better about yourself if you challenged yourself to find TWELVE songs that were challenging you. You'd get thru the first few easily and then have a harder time coming up with twelve—and think you're not so bad off! But with only three you tend to think you're kinda struggling. And... Interestingly, if you're capturing the stuff you appreciate in your life, research shows you're (somewhat paradoxically) better off limiting it to three things rather than going for twelve. By making it easy to note a few things you think you're crushing it and feel better about yourself whereas if you struggle to come up with twelve things you tend to think something must be wrong!)

Back to our regularly scheduled programming.

You identify your 12 greatest Sirens hits? Fantastic. Now, identify the #1 Siren song/kryptonite and make an Odysseus contract.

Just like Odysseus had his men tie him to the mast (while they stuffed bees wax in their ears) YOU need to PRECOMMIT as well.

Quit being surprised by the Sirens and know in advance what you'll do to avoid crashing!

In [HABITS 101](#) I talk about "If-Then Cue Triggers." (Check out the class!)

IF you hear the Sirens sing _____ (fill in blank)

THEN you will do _____.

Know it. Rock it.

WHEN/WHERE PLANS (HOW ARE YOURS?)

"In Christmas Study #2, all participants were given the same project: they were to write a report on how they spent Christmas Eve and submit it within two days of returning from the holiday. Individuals were then randomly assigned to two groups. One group was asked to create when/where plans for writing the essay; the other was not. Seventy-five percent of the group who had visited the future to specify the time and place for writing the report submitted it on time; only 33 percent of those without a plan completed the project.

"So whenever someone poses the question 'What's unique about humans?' feel free to skip the traditional answers about opposable thumbs, tool use, and language, and instead answer, 'Hope.'"

~ Shane J. Lopez Ph.D.

"In short, mindset influences every aspect of your life, from work to sports, from relationships to parenting. If you believe you can change and develop, you know you can move beyond your present limitations. This makes a growth mindset the natural companion of hope."

~ Shane J. Lopez Ph.D.

"In his early research on hope, Rick Snyder found that thinking about multiple pathways to a goal is a core skill of hopeful people. It is also one that can be taught."

~ Shane J. Lopez Ph.D.

Making a when/where plan is a straightforward process. Each time you get an assignment or set a goal, choose the day and time you will start working on it, and the place where you will work."

We have *if/then* plans. Now it's time for *when/where* plans.

The research is unequivocal about this. When you set a new goal or create an assignment for yourself, get really clear on WHEN (and where) you will do it. (But only if you want to 2x the odds of doing it! hah)

btw: This is why systems are so powerful. They're like PERMANENT when/where plans for your most important stuff. They're like rocket fuel for crushing it.

As *Dilbert*-creator Scott Adams says, he never wastes a brain cell thinking about what he's going to do in the morning. He's ALREADY decided he's going to do X when he gets up and energy is freshest, then Y while he's still feeling good, then work out at noon (he does it every.single.day) then Z in the afternoons when his energy is waning.

As a result, he gets WAY more done and feels WAY more flow + joy than people trying to figure out what they're going to do every AM.

Check out our Note on Scott's great book [How to Fail at Almost Everything and Still Win Big](#) for more brilliant insights on the power of systems.

For now, most importantly: What's the next micro domino you're going to knock over for your #1 goal? Sweet. WHEN and where are you going to crush it? #2x

PLAN A TO Z

"World-famous boxer and armchair philosopher Mike Tyson once observed, 'Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth.' No matter how good we are at futurecasting, life throws punches. A key skill of high-hope people is the ability to plan for ifs, the ability to anticipate obstacles and create multiple pathways to each and every goal. This skill is rooted in two core beliefs of hopeful people: there are many paths to goals and none of them is free of obstacles.

Futurecasting creates momentum, the energy of hope. This energy builds on the positive emotions around our goals, our sense of personal confidence (or agency), and our willpower, or ability to persevere. But when things don't go according to plan, our energy can be quickly depleted. Maybe we try harder, earning credit for our grit. But if we stick with the same strategy, using it over and over, we'll eventually crash. Instead, we need to develop the street smarts of hope. Creating a new way gives you the will you need to press on, a boost of will that keeps you going."

Remember our three core aspects of Hope? Hint: Goals + Agency + Pathways!

This great Idea is from the chapter on Pathways. If we want to strengthen our Hope muscles we need to know: 1) there are many paths to goals and 2) none of them is free of obstacles.

One GREAT way to dash our Hope is to violate those rules by a) having only one plan/path and/or b) thinking it's going to be easy.

In CONFIDENCE 101 I talk about Nassim Taleb's anti-fragile concept in which challenges make us stronger. One of the key ways we build that type of strength is thru what he calls "optionality." Basically, we need to have a lot of Pathways to our goal to avoid being fragile.

After reading this chapter where Shane talks about being willing to go from Plan A to Plan B to Plan C, I ran with it and mapped out Plans A to Z of how we're going to hit our current biz goal. Infinite Pathways! Super fun. I'll be chatting about that more in BIZ 101.

For now: How are *your* Pathways? Can you create a Plan A to Z on all the different ways you can

"Followers—students, employees, congregants, citizens—all need hope. There it is. I just summed up the last century's worth of scholarly works on leadership. It is worth repeating. Followers need hope."

~ Shane J. Lopez Ph.D.

reach your Goal? Then lean into your Plan A knowing that it'll have obstacles and that you have options as you get your Hope on and create a future that's simply astonishingly awesome! :)

LEADERSHIP + HOPE + ENGAGEMENT

"When people have a boss who makes them feel hopeful about the future, they are more committed to their jobs. Specifically, when Gallup asked followers whether their leader at work (typically a manager) made them enthusiastic about the future, of those who said yes, 69 percent were engaged in their jobs, scoring high on a measure of involvement in and excitement about their work. These engaged employees are the products of hopeful leadership. They are more innovative and productive than others, and they are more likely to be with the company for the long haul.

Of those followers who said their leader did not make them enthusiastic about the future, a mere 1 percent were committed and energized at work. These disengaged workers are a threat to business, coworkers, and themselves. They not only fail to make meaningful contributions; they undermine the hard work of others, and they are likely to be more physically and mentally unhealthy than their coworkers. And, for good and bad, it is somewhat likely that they won't be with the company one year later."

That's nuts. 69% of people with a boss who inspires them are engaged. Only 1% (!!!) of those whose boss does not elicit hope are engaged.

If you're a leader, it's IMPERATIVE that you inspire hope. And, of course, we are ALL leaders--of ourselves, our kids, or colleagues and those who may directly work for us.

Let's create hope in a better future as we optimize and actualize!

B

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

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About the Author of "Making Hope Happen"

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Shane J. Lopez, Ph.D., a Gallup Senior Scientist, is the world's leading authority on the psychology of hope. He has published numerous professional books on what is right with people, including *The Encyclopedia of Positive Psychology*. He is also one of the most vocal advocates of psychological reform of America's education system. He lives in Lawrence, Kansas, with his wife and son. Connect: shanelopez.com.

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Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + common sense + virtue + mastery + fun. Learn more and optimize your life at brianjohnson.me.