

YOUR WORKBOOK

(HOPE)

Survive first and then thrive



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DISCLAIMER

"Your Workbook" (Hope) is based on my life journey and experiences and is not provided as a scientific text but as a storybook with lessons that can be very useful in anyone else's journey. It is intended to present ideas that excite and incite your imagination as a work of art that would allow anyone to develop their life skills.

My goal is to provide mentorship and this book is not a substitute for medical, psychological or psychiatric treatment or counselling.

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FOREWORD

If I had to fill a swimming pool with a bucket I could debate the fairness of it or realize my options:

- 1) Whine about it
- 2) Shut up and fill the swimming pool with a bucket
- 3) Fill the swimming pool with a bucket while I whine about it

My adaptation to Canadian life involved choosing option 3. Although it is important to fight unfair situations, it is more important for me to do so in a manner that allows me to survive and then thrive.

Many times, I found myself unable to fully grasp or understand what was going on in my new environment, I remember sometimes feeling completely overwhelmed, angry, frustrated or just giving up. What I discuss in "My Handbook" influenced my life. Looking back I can see that I did not lack desire, drive or ability but the right tactics.

I adapted because I had to and not always because I wanted to. It was necessary to do this if I wanted to **survive first and then thrive**. I learned that what I had to do always took precedence over what I wanted to do and I became skilled at understanding what was relevant and what was important.

I grew up in an African culture that exposed me to the art of story telling as a form of therapy and the use of proverbs and analogies to illustrate and stimulate the imagination. I have used this as an effective tactic in my medical practice. I was often surprised by how unfamiliar my "North American" patients were with this method, but very gratified by how quickly they responded to it. The feedback from these many patients, friends and strangers whom I have shared these experiences with convinced me that a book like this is worth writing.

PROLOGUE

WINNERS & LOSERS

I am told that there are about forty million to one billion sperm cells in every ejaculation, each one of those guys hoping to be the one that wins the favour of a little egg, sitting at the end of what can only be described as a precarious journey, through a very hostile birth canal, designed to separate the strong sperm from the weak. Only less than a hundred make it to the end and then the timing had to be just perfect because fertilization is never guaranteed.

You have been taking care of yourself since you were a 2 celled organism, something told you to leave the fallopian tube and start to implant in the uterus, the same mechanism had you start to replicate cells and create the complex structure you now inhabit. Your very ability to survive and make survival decisions definitely pre-dated your brain.

Possibly 50% of pregnancies are lost with the mother never knowing she was pregnant. The trimesters (every 3 months of pregnancy) all present their unique challenges, each of which you manage to scale some before you even had a brain. With every breath, with every metabolism cycle, you fought to be here realizing that the only thing guaranteed without much effort is death.

Everywhere you turned there was always something trying to kill, you even your mother's immune system could turn against you if you made the mistake of getting close and yet like a cellular ninja you negotiated your way through this battle of survival.

You spent nine months in an aquatic environment, instinctively drawing food from your maternal source before you even had awareness of self. You accomplished one of many critical events by successfully transitioning from an aquatic environment and taking

your first breath at birth. All these amazing things, accomplished without your awareness of any thoughts or conscious sense of your existence.

You negotiate your way through the early hours, mostly blind and deaf and yet you instinctively know to reach for the nourishment of your mother's milk. While in the womb, you have developed unique systems designed to help you survive the rocky road on the outside.

There are so many things out of your control, like what environment you end up in, whether you are surrounded by factors that will enhance your survival and yet you do not focus on this, but simply focus on surviving the next sixty seconds to the next minute, the next sixty minutes to the next hour, the next twenty four hours to the next day, the next seven days to the next week and the next fifty two weeks to the next year and as you maintain your focus you continue to grow, you continue to adapt and you continue to learn. You continue to live and to survive.

You had survived some of the biggest threats to your very existence long before you even knew you were here, all around you, at every stage, countless perils on your way. The lottery of life is the biggest lottery you ever played, with the odds constantly stacked against you and your unique abilities constantly making lemonade out of lemons and finding a way to hang around.

You stand before me now, you have a brain and conscious awareness of what you have always been unconsciously aware of, that nothing was ever guaranteed but death, you call yourself a loser and tell me that you are helpless. Look around you my friend for in this moment and every moment that exists for you, does so because you won.

So my winning loser who continues to win even though you perceive you lose, continue to enjoy the gifts you are giving to yourself, because your sense of losing, is your fruit of winning, but remember all the eggs and sperm cells that didn't make it here.

HOPE

Hope is the state that promotes the belief in good outcomes related to events and circumstances in one's life. Hope is free.

I grew up in Nigeria and was very influenced by the "Yoruba" cultural belief in fate and destiny. The belief was that every individual was predestined to accomplish certain things or achieve certain things in life and whether this happened or not was very dependent on, the choices we made (things we had control over) and fate (things we have no control over).

In Yoruba culture of storytelling and analogies are useful in gaining or regaining perspective and making good choices especially in difficult situations. Any challenge provides an opportunity for growth if you allow yourself to perceive it in that manner. When things do not go as planned you have a choice, to perceive the outcome either as a work in progress or a total failure. How you perceive anything is just as important or sometimes more important than what is really happening.

Life is like a journey where nothing is ever easy or hard but relative to how you choose to see (perceive) it. How you choose to see things is a remarkable tool that can work for you or against you. You are always influenced by how you see things and this in turn is directly related to how you have defined them in your mind therefore to do it differently you have to be willing to define it differently in your mind.

To be functional you have to be able to adjust your perception as you are provided new information that challenges your previous knowledge and indicates clearly that there is a need for change. Dysfunction arises if you fail to recognize this information or simply ignore or deny it.

Every experience in life is an opportunity for learning and you are the one who defines an experience as good or bad. You should try to

discover the lesson in every experience. Every complex situation is made up of multiple simple blocks and the way to deal with a complex challenge is to break it down to its simplest form while still maintaining a keen sense of its complexity.

The most important relationship is the one that an individual has with themselves.

Hope is a state of mind. The decision to be hopeful is a personal choice, it does not guarantee the results that you want but it makes it more likely to occur.

Being hopeful is a habit that is formed over time through repetition and reinforcement and although getting the results that you want is a strong motivator you should learn to be hopeful even when results you want seem unlikely to occur.

A good analogy would be wishing to win the lottery but not buying a ticket. Although the odds of winning are quite slim there always is a chance but the odds become zero if you do not buy a lottery ticket. Life is a gamble and being hopeful in life is like buying a lottery ticket, there is no guarantee that you will win but at least you are one step closer to making it happen.

Being hopeful is not the same thing as wishing or fantasizing, it is a very active process that involves a willingness to convince yourself over and over again about the possibility of what you want occurring. It is important to be cognizant of how things are while allowing yourself to imagine how you would like them to be. Being hopeful is not about trying to will yourself to succeed, it is about simply imagining yourself succeeding, a form of "self programming",

The "Hope Method"

To be hopeful you have to:

1) Allow yourself to believe in the possibility of what you hope for. To believe, you have to allow yourself to imagine it, use your imagination to see it in your mind.

Using your imagination involves a willingness to put yourself in an "awake trance state" such that you are fully aware of the present reality (based on probabilities) while allowing yourself to experience an alternate reality (based on possibilities).

2) Verbalize your expectation (say it out loud) consistent with the direction of you chose.

I do a ten and ten routine i.e. I say it ten times to make a unit and then say ten units a day. I say it out loud so that my unconscious mind and brain hear it. It is important that I say it convincingly without necessarily reflecting on what I am saying but simply repeating it in a manner that when my brain hears it, it sounds like I mean it. I think of it as "self programming".

3) Repeat the above process often. Reinforcing the results that you want through repetition of the process. You become what you do most often. Being hopeful is a habit that can be formed through repetition.

Visualize where you want to be and permit yourself to believe in the certainty of it even though everything else around you may indicate otherwise.

When I encourage someone to be hopeful I am actually asking them to be cautiously optimistic and not to willingly ignore the reality of the situation they are in, especially if it is bleak, but simply to entertain the notion or possibility of a more favourable outcome despite it all.

Being hopeful is a choice you make and it is sometimes a very difficult one in a world that is high on facts and short on faith. It involves a

willingness to accept and accommodate your vulnerability, to be accepting of things the way they are but stubborn enough to imagine a more desirable outcome and a willingness to make it happen.

Hope gives meaning to our existence, reinforces purpose and the notion that there is a reason why we exist, that it is worthwhile to be here and worthwhile to contribute to the existence and propagation of our species. The absence of hope is felt as despair, it is a natural consequence of not being able to fill the void and reinforce our purpose. When hope is absent or lacking our perception of reality is often undesirable to us.

I feel that life is only as fair as we believe it to be and does not guarantee or promise us anything. We make things happen through our actions and being hopeful.

The thought that something or someone cares for us is very appealing and the concept that our existence matters and is of value seems to be an important part of being human and remaining hopeful.

People who buy into this concept of value seem to attach importance and relevance to their existence and the existence of those around them, they thrive and their perception of wellbeing is heightened, their experience of life reported as very positive. When this concept is not reinforced the person does not do as well and the journey to find oneself could be more difficult.

Points to remember:

Being hopeful is not the same thing as wishing or fantasizing but it is a very active process that involves a willingness to convince yourself over and over again about the possibility of what you want occurring.

To be hopeful you have to:

- 1) Allow yourself to believe in the possibility of what you hope for.
- 2) Verbalize your expectation consistent with the direction of the results that you want. A form of "self programming".
- 3) Repeat the above process often to reinforce the results.

DAILY EXERCISE

EVERYDAY

IN EVERY WAY

GETTING BETTER

AND BETTER

MORE CAPABLE

MORE ABLE

Repeat the above phrase aloud (quietly) 10 (ten) times (one after the other) = 1 (one) set

Do 1 (one) set every hour for 10 (ten) hours - 10 (ten) sets a day

Record the time whenever you do a set

Keep a daily journal of anything you consider important that happened on that day.

QUESTIONS

WHAT IS HOPE?

HOW EXPENSIVE IS HOPE?

DOES HOPE GUARANTEE SUCCESS?

HOW IS BEING HOPEFUL DIFFERENT FROM
FANTASIZING?

WHAT IS THE HOPE METHOD?

ANSWERS