CAREER RECOVERY
Creating Hopeful Careers in Difficult Times

Spencer Niles, Norman Amundson, Roberta Neault, & Hyung Joon Yoon
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This book provides a model that you can use throughout your lifetime to guide you in career planning. The model we introduce is one that has been tested and used with a variety of populations as diverse as university students, Syrian refugees, unemployed workers, and many others throughout the world.

Career Recovery emphasizes the Hope-Action Theory. Hope-Action Theory offers strategies that can guide your career— even in these difficult times. Having a strategy that is proven and tested in some of the most challenging situations, such as Hope-Action Theory, provides confidence that, by using the steps we discuss in this book, (steps you can use throughout your life) you can take ownership of your career development.

Also in Section I by addressing the challenges workers experience today. As you know very well, they are substantial. Yet, even in these difficult times, there are strategies you can use to both take care of yourself and to construct a career that you find meaningful. To move forward in this way, we all need to have a sense of hope. Hope is crucial to gaining momentum in your career planning. We explain how you can generate and sustain a sense of hope in your life and work.

In Section I, we introduce the essential aspects of Hope-Action Theory. In Chapter 1, we discuss the challenges of effective career self-management in the post-pandemic period. We also discuss strategies for creating a sense of hope even in the most challenging times. More specifically, in Chapter 2, we introduce the importance of hope in the career planning process. This content provides the foundation for Section II, which opens with Chapter 3 in which we provide an introductory overview to the key competencies comprising the Hope-Action Theory.

Section II also provides a more in-depth look into the crucial process of engaging in self-reflection to develop self-clarity. This process provides a solid foundation for all effective career self-management. The chapters of Section II guide readers through deeper self-exploration and address the topics of passions, skills, personal style, and values (Chapters 4–7).

Section III represents a turning point in the book. It begins with Chapter 8 highlighting the need for support (e.g., emotional, informational, and financial) in career and educational planning. Support, the common factor emerging in almost all research related to resilience, gets people through challenging times and helps them maintain their engagement in the challenging processes of the post-pandemic period. The steps discussed (vision, goal setting, and planning) in Chapters 9 and 10 are the points
in the Hope-Action Theory when the primarily inward process of self-exploration turns outward as you learn how to connect self-information to future possibilities.

Section IV moves even more deeply into outward action via the process of connecting to the world-of-work, implementing decisions and turning possibilities into realities (Chapters 12 and 13, respectively). More specifically, this section begins with a focus in Chapter 11 on connecting to possibilities through occupational research, integrating self-assessment data, learning how to communicate career goals to others, and making use of trend spotting in career self-management. Chapter 12 highlights how to intentionally make the most of the opportunities connected to career and educational goals. Chapter 13 guides you as you turn possibilities into realities through effective job searching. Chapter 14 addresses how to generate job leads and work opportunities. We also describe how you can refine job interview skills and develop social support in the job search process. Finally, Section IV concludes (Chapter 15) by teaching you how to use the new information you learned about yourself and occupations as they engage in the ongoing process to manage you careers effectively—even in difficult times.

In essence, the book ends by returning to the beginning (self-reflection to develop self-clarity). This cyclical process highlights two essential facts: (a) The self evolves, thus, we are continually making choices and adjusting to the choices we make, and (b) the world of work also evolves over time, making choosing and adjusting to one’s choices continuous requirements. Toward those realities, the Hope-Action Theory is a model that you can use throughout your lifetime to engage in productive career self-management.
SECTION I

INTRODUCTION TO HOPE-ACTION THEORY
CASE EXAMPLE
Ruth, age 52, was doing well. She would say that she had finally hit her stride and was feeling as though she were in her prime. She was working in her dream job and helping to provide a good income for her family. Ruth worked as a pilot for one of the largest airlines in the world. In every way, Ruth was the consummate professional. Highly respected for both her skill as a pilot and her care for her coworkers, this mother of two felt truly blessed. Ruth and her husband, Alex, owned a lovely home in an Atlanta suburb. Alex worked as a manager for a very well-known hotel chain. Their jobs provided a substantial income with great benefits, including the chance for the family to take marvelous vacations throughout the world.

OBJECTIVES
This chapter focuses on the importance of recovering from the trauma occurring during the COVID-19 pandemic. We introduce the concepts of “positive uncertainty,” the experience of trauma, and the Hope-Action Theory as starting places for career recovery. After reading and completing activities in this chapter, you will be able to do the following:

- Understand how the pandemic experience created career trauma
- Understand the importance of positive uncertainty and hope in career recovery
Most would say that Ruth and Alex had it all. Then, people started falling ill. At first, it seemed like the typical flu, but later it became clear that it was much worse. The mother of a flight attendant whom Ruth worked with suddenly passed away after being ill for a week. Another colleague’s brother went into intensive care and was placed on a ventilator. Similar stories emerged of people falling ill, some missing work for a week or so, others faring much worse. Then reality hit. This was no ordinary flu. This was much, much worse. An apparent deadly illness for which there was no cure. Within days, news reports included terms like “pandemic,” “coronavirus,” and “COVID-19.” Workers were sent home, not knowing if they would have a job to return to once the pandemic was under control. While work stopped, bills continued, and many experienced substantial financial challenges.

Overriding all of this was the abiding fear of contracting the virus. Devastating stories of people who were healthy one day and placed in intensive care the next day commonly appeared in the news. The most tragic outcomes were those who not only died but died alone as their family members were barred from being with their loved ones due to the need to contain the virus’s spread. Despite how well things had been going for Ruth and Alex, they were not immune to the pandemic’s fallout. People stopped flying, and hotel occupancies came to a screeching halt. Not only were Ruth and Alex worried about staying healthy, but they were also worried about paying their bills. Alex was laid off first. Then, Ruth’s work schedule was substantially reduced. Although they had some savings, they worried how long those would last. Things felt like they were crumbling in a hurry. As part of his benefits package, Alex was invited to meet with a career coach. He wasn’t sure what help the coach could be, but he was worried and not sure how to move forward. He felt numb, stuck, and hopeless.

Although the details may vary, the themes are the same—millions of workers worried about staying healthy, paying bills, and whether they would be able to survive the storm known as the COVID-19 pandemic. Everything changed in a few short weeks. Unemployment numbers exploded, and although the government worked to find ways to help, for many, the help was either too slow in arriving or too little to make a
difference. Against this backdrop, having a sense of hope for the future seemed impossible. Yet giving up, whether or not you had the virus or lost a job, meant the pandemic won. What Alex needed was a way to navigate the storm. Some strategies for identifying and considering his options. And the chance to connect with others dealing with the same challenges. With this book, we offer strategies that you can use to navigate any career challenge you confront. Given all that is going on today, that is a bold statement. Yet, it is true. With a strategy, you can create a plan that makes sense. Without a strategy, you could feel like a small boat lost in a raging sea.

During the pandemic, most people found themselves lamenting about the economy. What about the job crisis? many would wonder. It was a common phrase uttered by many who saw it just too overwhelming to comprehend how our society had been shaken by the current health and economic crisis. A huge and tragic double whammy. The global spread of the COVID-19 virus was unexpected and devastating in every possible way. It would be great to think that we could just go back to the way things were, but that seemed hard to imagine. The pandemic brought a new reality and a new "normal." There was no denying or avoiding that fact. Many were struggling to deal with what had happened, cope with the shock, figure out a way to rebalance, and figure out a way to keep moving. The trauma was real, and getting through it would take some time and support. That is exactly what Ruth and Alex were struggling with when Alex went to meet his career coach for the first time.

For this kind of career recovery to occur, we need to start with mustering a sense of hope and determination, a resolve to get through the crisis and emerge with a new sense of direction and purpose. Most of us have encountered significant challenges in our lives before the pandemic. We’ve been through tough times before, and what we learned from those experiences will serve us well in the current crisis. One of the first challenges to address is the fact that, like all crises, many things are uncertain. Ambiguity is one of the most challenging things for people to cope with, but uncertainty does not have to lead to ambivalence. We need to remind ourselves of the coping strategies we used in the past, draw on our resources, learn new resources, and keep moving forward.

The decision-making expert H. B. Gelatt talked about the need to develop a stance of “positive uncertainty” toward our decisions. Certainty is what makes you comfortable; uncertainty is what makes you creative. Both are useful. Ruth and Alex experienced a substantial and unexpected upheaval in their lives. Seeking some degree of certainty and stability in the form of definitive answers to the questions they were
CHAPTER 1  CAREER RECOVERY DURING THE PANDEMIC

asking (e.g., “Will we survive?” “What job will I do if I can’t do this one?” “How will we pay our bills?”) is important and makes perfect sense. They need to develop solutions to these essential questions. In looking at their futures and considering new possibilities, however, positive uncertainty can open the door to creative and new solutions to next steps taken in the current context. Their creativity can lead them to identifying the next opportunity.

Positive uncertainty also involves responding to situations with a sense of excitement rather than fear. In this book, we provide resources you can use to generate more excitement than worry about your current and future situation. We offer a structure that you can quickly learn and readily apply in navigating any career challenge you encounter. The concepts we teach in this book are grounded in years of research and our work with thousands of people in similar situations as you. We are eager to help and honored to join you on this journey.

Let’s start by saying a little about hope (more in the next chapter). Hope represents the core of what we will discuss throughout the book. The type of hope that we focus on, however, is not hope in the sense of wishful thinking. Wishful thinking is helpful but not long-lasting and not likely to help too much when you encounter challenges in your career. Wishful thinking fades away amid those challenges. Instead, we focus on hope that is grounded in action. When you take steps that are intentional and goal-directed, then you begin to experience something very different. You start to believe that there are actually things you can do to improve your situation. You begin to generate a sense of hope. This type of action-oriented hope drives the model we will teach you, which is called Hope-Action Theory. This model is grounded in hope and contains a set of competencies that, collectively, provide you with the structure you can rely on to manage your career effectively throughout your lifetime—no matter what challenges you encounter.

Weathering the Storm

The first step of the journey is to acknowledge and recognize what you have just gone through and what you are continuing to go through. If you have lost your job, you are no doubt in a swirl. In talking with people about their experience of being unemployed, they often speak about “being in the storm,” “being blindsided,” finding themselves “up in the air,” “falling off a cliff,” being “lost in a fog,” or having their “legs kicked out from under them.” Using metaphors to describe your experience is often an excellent way to provide a new perspective on your experience. Naming what
you are experiencing is an excellent first step in beginning to deal with it constructively.

**ACTIVITY 1.1 Metaphor**

If you had to describe what you have experienced and are currently experiencing, how would you describe it? What metaphor(s) would you use?

While these images are all somewhat different, they do have something in common. They suggest that we have gone through some form of **trauma**. Trauma is a deeply distressing or disturbing experience, and it is associated with a variety of emotional responses, some of which include:

- shock, denial, disbelief, confusion, distraction, anger, irritability,
- anxiety, fear, self-blame, withdrawal, hopelessness, despair, numbness, grief, disorientation

Because the pandemic was unforeseen by most of us, feeling any of these emotions (or all of them) is normal. The pandemic was unexpected and gave people little opportunity for any type of preparation. It also was quite unlike anything that we have experienced during the globalized age (Philp, 2020).

When considering this extensive range of reactions, it is essential to recognize that there is a great deal of variability in how people perceive their situation, how they react to it, and how they cope with the experience. We all respond differently depending on our circumstances, our disposition, and our past experiences. What is common is that both our thoughts and our feelings are involved as we attempt to come to terms with what has happened. Our reactions are normal and to be expected under the circumstances.

It is one thing to have a traumatic experience and then to get back to our regular life patterns, but this event has changed our lives in so many ways. In many respects, we will continue to carry this with us for years to come. What makes this situation unique is the fact that coupled with the trauma-related physical threat of the virus, there is also the actual experience of being unemployed or underemployed experienced by millions of people.
There has been considerable research exploring the impact of unemployment and underemployment on mental and physical well-being (Moser, 2009). The research findings are consistent in showing the potential for a decline in physical and psychological health. Unemployment offers a set of unique challenges (loss reactions), and underemployment can negatively impact one’s self-confidence and readiness for change. Unemployment can also lead to an emotional roller-coaster–type of experience (Borgen & Amundson, 1987). Something positive can occur that brightens your spirits and pulls you up. If that experience is not what you were hoping for, however, it can lead to a rapid downward emotional swing and further discouragement can set in. This emotional roller-coaster experience incorporates aspects of both loss and burnout reactions.

It is essential when viewing these reactions to fully understand that they are a normal response to a challenging situation. They will occur, and they can present a barrier, but they can also be overcome, and they won’t last forever. It is understandable when our basic human needs are being undermined that we will have some type of reaction. Basic human needs include the need for financial security, the need for relationships and community, the need for a structure to our life, and the need for meaning and purpose in what we are doing. The storm or turbulence in our lives can be disorienting and disruptive. Still, it is possible to recover our sense of balance and hope, to fashion a new perspective on what is happening around us, to apply our creative and intellectual capacity to generate new possibilities, and to reset our resolve to move forward. We are eager to guide you through these experiences toward a better, more positive, and more hopeful place. We are confident you can achieve all these things and more.

Our Hope-Action Theory approach is laid out in the next chapter and this is what most of the rest of the book is all about. We place HOPE at the center point of career development and use a pinwheel diagram to describe the various competencies that help power our sense of hopefulness. Please read on! The journey is just beginning.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Take a close look at the metaphor image you put down at the beginning of this chapter. How could you change the image so that it is more positive and hopeful? You can stick with the image you put down or create something different.

2. If you take a “positive uncertainty” stance in going forward, how might that influence your actions and your general well-being?
References


OBJECTIVES

This chapter focuses on the importance of hope in career planning. We introduce the Hope-Action Theory as a strategy for creating and sustaining hope in your career development. After reading and completing activities in this chapter, you will be able to do the following:

- Understand the importance of hope
- Understand how to generate and sustain hope in your career

CASE EXAMPLE

Alice met with her career coach to discuss her job loss. She had worked with an accounting firm since her senior year of college. Despite feeling sad and angry about losing her job due to the COVID-19 pandemic, deep down she was also scared. Alice knew that she often found her workdays boring and not challenging. She originally expected to find each day to be enjoyable and meaningful. She had landed a job that connected directly to her college major. Things were looking good! Although she experienced many positive moments at work, there were also moments that were anything but positive. She often wondered: Is this how it was supposed to be? Did her negative experiences mean that she had chosen the wrong career? She felt panic as she considered these questions while walking to meet with her career coach for the first time since losing her job. Although she had entered her job full of hope, she exited it with more
questions than answers, with her hope in doubt, and with a myriad of feelings she was having trouble sorting through.

Alice’s first work experience was a bit of a “shocker” from start to finish. She was particularly rattled by the finish. Several months before, she was making plans for vacation and she and her fiancé were considering buying a home together. COVID-19 changed everything, however. As she attempted to adjust to her new reality, she had a host of questions. Although there were positive aspects to her job, there were a good many less-than-positive experiences. And the unexpected ending shook her confidence and her hope.

At the start of her work, she was excited and looked forward to the work she would do. She had hoped that her experience would reinforce her choice of career. What she had not planned for were the challenges that she encountered long before the virus changed things. Alice was having trouble integrating these experiences into her overall understanding of what a work experience should be like. In essence, she had expected things to flow much more smoothly. She was shaken by “the rough waters” she encountered and their implications for her future plans. Were they signs of a poor career choice? Were they indications of “issues” that she needed to address to become a better prospective employee? What should she think at this point and what should she do? Especially now. Where she had been hopeful, she now was concerned, skeptical, and questioning her choices. Moreover, she is unclear as to what she should do next and her hopefulness has been replaced by worry. Maybe most importantly, she felt betrayed. She had worked hard, been productive, earned positive reviews, yet here she was. Unemployed.

In her first meeting with her career coach, Alice was invited to share what she was feeling. She was reluctant to discuss her feelings at first. Part of her wasn’t sure she could handle all that she was feeling. As she started to share, however, her feelings began flowing out. Underneath all her feelings was a sense of fear and confusion. Although she was grateful for the unemployment money she would receive, that obviously was only a short-term solution. She felt that everything was “up in the air” and she wanted to reconsider everything about her career. She also shared that it felt good to talk about what she was experiencing. Her career coach shared that she had worked with many people in the situation Alice was in and that what she was feeling was very normal and typical.

Alice is in a very challenging situation. She is having doubts about her career choice and at the same time dealing with the current economic
创伤和失业的挑战。她的“飘浮不定”的比喻捕捉了她经历这种动荡的部分方式。创伤和失业研究都指出了认知和情感不稳定性。在这些情况下，人们往往会感到困惑、恐惧、迷失方向和焦虑。他们常常怀疑自己，怀疑自己的能力。这些反应部分反映了所谓的“情感过山车”（Borgen & Amundson, 1987）。在这些条件下，爱丽丝对她的职业选择提出问题并不奇怪。这些问题需要认真对待，但同时，认识到这些问题产生的背景也很重要。

回答这些问题在很大程度上取决于你如何概念化职业发展。很多时候，人们会把工作和他们看待关系的方式看作是相同的。具体来说，困难时期可能意味着他们选择的合作伙伴或职业是错误的；在爱丽丝的例子中，这是一个职业。虽然这可能是真的，但将工作（和人际关系）总是一帆风顺和积极的预期是不现实的。在所有职业中，都有挑战和奖励。有时事情进展顺利，甚至轻松。然而，有时感觉像是一场不断的攀登。有时是兴奋，有时是无聊。因此，有效地管理你的职业生涯时，重要的是能够处理工作中的积极和挑战性方面。

爱丽丝正在努力确定哪些挑战是正常的，哪些是表明她做出了一个错误的选择。她还第一次经历失业。她的职业教练分享了她关于失业后恢复可以期待的内容。教练保证她会恢复。通过支持，以及使用系统性方法考虑她的情况，也许有可能不仅生存下来，甚至可以发展得更好。爱丽丝感到被她的教练支持和理解。她可能有希望恢复，她想暂时地认为。

为什么希望很重要？

我们大多数人都经历过对生活感到不抱希望的时期。试着回忆一下你缺乏希望的特定经历，甚至感到绝望的时刻。想象一下，就那么一会儿，你对那个经历的细节。是什么动摇了你的希望？也许你尝试了某件事，然后学到了你对那个选择的期待甚至不喜欢的东西。这些经历可能让你开始怀疑

"创伤和失业的挑战。她的“飘浮不定”的比喻捕捉了她经历这种动荡的部分方式。创伤和失业研究都指出了认知和情感不稳定性。在这些情况下，人们往往会感到困惑、恐惧、迷失方向和焦虑。他们常常怀疑自己，怀疑自己的能力。这些反应部分反映了所谓的“情感过山车”（Borgen & Amundson, 1987）。在这些条件下，爱丽丝对她的职业选择提出问题并不奇怪。这些问题需要认真对待，但同时，认识到这些问题产生的背景也很重要。

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yourself and your career. Continue focusing on your specific hope-challenged experience. How did you feel about yourself in that moment? How confident were you at that time in your ability to do things successfully? What questions did it lead you to ask about yourself and your situation? What was your energy level? Did you feel stuck? Maybe immobilized? Lacking in motivation? Did you lack a sense of direction and purpose in that moment? When our hope is low, these reactions are all possible experiences. Such experiences can derail our momentum and lead us to ask serious questions about who we are and what we want. In the worst case, we can become depressed and feel unable to move forward. In such instances, we sometimes feel as though these more negative feelings will stay with us forever and that there is nothing we can do to shake them. We want our situation and our feelings to shift toward something more positive, but we might not have a strategy for creating this positive change in our lives.

We want you to know that there are proven steps you can take to make positive changes when you experience moments of hopelessness. You can use these steps to increase your hope, identify a goal, chart a direction, and move forward toward your goal with confidence and purpose. There is no superpower required to make this happen! The steps are easy to learn and practice. And, once learned, they will be helpful to you for the rest of your life.

Our goal in this book is to teach you these steps that will help you address any career challenge you will encounter, now and in the future. These steps, which anyone can learn, will feel like a superpower, but, as we noted, they really are not. Having said that, if by using them you feel more confident, more directed, happier, energized, motivated, and like you have a real sense of purpose in your life, then, well, maybe they are steps to a superpower!

A key to having these positive experiences is to understand the nature of hope and why hope is so important.

Research evidence consistently demonstrates that hope is associated with a number of positive outcomes across cultures. Specifically, high hope has been correlated with high levels of job performance, sports performance, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, clarity in career decision making, overall confidence, and academic achievement, to mention just a few of the ways in which hope is important in our lives. Conversely, lack of hope has been correlated with high levels of absenteeism from school and work, disengagement from academics, and higher levels of dropping out of school. So, having a way to create and sustain a sense of hope in your life is a big deal!
There are, however, many interpretations of the term “hope.” Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.) defines hope as “a desire accompanied by expectation of, or belief in, fulfillment.” Hope has been conceptualized in a variety of ways in the counseling literature. For example, Diemer and Blustein (2007) defined career-related hope as involving a person’s commitment to the notion of career and to working in the future, despite experiencing external barriers. Diemer and Blustein’s definition includes having a psychological commitment to working despite the challenges one may encounter in their career development. Others conceptualize hope as a “multidimensional life force characterized by confident yet uncertain expectations of achieving a future good” (Dufault & Martochhio, 1985, p. 380). Averill, Catlin, and Chon (1990) conceptualize hope as primarily an emotion rather than a cognitive construct. Similarly, Bruininks and Malle (2005) conceptualize hope as an emotion that occurs when an individual is focused on an important positive future outcome, over which he or she has little (but still some) personal control.

Our definition of hope is based on the work of the late Rick Snyder (1994, 2002). Snyder, a clinical psychologist, was one of the world’s leading hope researchers. In Snyder’s approach to hope, he perceived success (both formative and summative success) related to goal pursuit as leading to positive emotions and, conversely, failure leading to negative emotions. High hope people respond differently than low hope people when they encounter impediments to goal achievement. High hope individuals typically respond more positively in such instances (i.e., they are more like to persist toward goal achievement) because they can identify alternative ways to achieve their goals and can adjust their strategies for goal achievement as necessary, while low hope individuals are less successful in this regard (Snyder, 1994). With this in mind, Snyder (2002) defined hope as “the perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals, and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways” (p. 249). According to this theory, hopeful individuals are more likely to have practical goals for their lives. Moreover, they are able to find different ways to pursue their goals and, importantly, they take sustained actions toward goal achievement. Thus, in Snyder’s model, hope is comprised of three primary components: (a) a goal (or anchor points), (b) thoughts (or pathways) about how to achieve those goals, and (c) the confidence and willingness (agency) to achieve those goals. So, Snyder (2002) conceptualized hope as “primarily a way of thinking, with feelings playing an important, albeit contributory role” (p. 249).

Snyder’s definition of hope is very different than the more common belief that hope is simply wishful thinking. Undoubtedly, you have
heard someone say something like "I hope things turn out okay." There is nothing wrong with wishing for positive outcomes. Jiminy Cricket told Pinocchio that "when you wish upon a star your dreams come true." Unfortunately, just wishing for an outcome rarely generates the outcome you desire. More usually some action has to happen for the positive outcomes you desire to become a reality. Wishing thinking just by itself is far too passive. It suggests that there is nothing for you to do to increase the probability of a desired outcome occurring. That is not the sort of hope we suggest you rely on. Rather, we recommend a view that aligns with Snyder’s, which is much more action oriented. In this approach, you must be motivated to take intentional actions to achieve an important and specific goal.

**ACTIVITY 2.1 Goal Identification**

Rather than continuing to read at this point, we ask that you take time to identify a specific goal that is important to you, one that will require some effort on your part but also one that you have a realistic probability of achieving in the next month.

Goals are important because they provide a purpose and direction for you. It is the difference between getting in your car and driving with no destination in mind and having a clear destination in mind. Once you identify a goal you have a direction to move toward. Goals anchor purposive behavior.

Goals can be short term or long term. They can be big (for example, to earn a PhD) or small (to be well prepared for an exam next week). They must, however, be important to you. An important goal should be connected to your values. Try to identify the values that are embedded in the goal you just identified. Values can be things such as making a positive difference in the world; helping others; earning a high income; using abilities; having time for family and friends; living in a healthy way (exercising, eating right, etc.); being in charge of your time; traveling; having a family; being creative; academic achievement; prestige; working hard; doing things that are interesting to you; following rules; and so on. Knowing which values are most important to you is important. Your goals should connect to your important values whenever this is possible; otherwise, it will not be a goal that you care about and you will not be motivated to achieve it. That said, it is true that some goals only connect to your values indirectly. For example, some people struggle with taking general education courses in college.
because they do not see a direct connection to their interests and goals. In most instances, however, these courses are required for graduation. In these situations, the best some can do is to understand that while a particular requirement is not connected to values in an obvious way, it is necessary to achieve a goal that is valued: graduation from college.

**ACTIVITY 2.2 Values Sorting**

Use the list that follows to identify your most important values. Limit your selection of values to no more than five by placing an “X” next to the value. Although there may be other values on the list that are important to you, limiting your list to five forces you to identify your most valued values. Feel free to use the “other” option to list a value that is important to you (in your top five) but that is not on the list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values List</th>
<th>Values List</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>_____ Good family relationships</td>
<td>_____ Associating with people I like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____ Financial security</td>
<td>_____ Success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____ Job security</td>
<td>_____ Freedom to live where I choose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____ A world that is free of discrimination</td>
<td>_____ Leisure time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____ Creativity</td>
<td>_____ Fame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____ Having a set routine</td>
<td>_____ Strong religious faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____ Time by myself</td>
<td>_____ Good health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____ Community activities</td>
<td>_____ Adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____ Physical activities</td>
<td>_____ World peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____ An attractive physical appearance</td>
<td>_____ A beautiful home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____ Variety</td>
<td>_____ Having children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____ Power</td>
<td>_____ Autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____ Recognition</td>
<td>_____ Helping others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____ Prestige</td>
<td>_____ Economic rewards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____ Freedom from stress</td>
<td>_____ Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now, review your top-five list and try to place them in order of priority from 1 to 5. Write the name of the value next to the appropriate number and then define it for yourself. For example, I may value “economic rewards” and define that as having a job in which I earn $50,000 per year, but someone else may define it as earning no less than $100,000 per year. What matters is how you define it. Take the time to provide your definition. This is an important step; do not skip it.

### Values Definitions

(1 = most important)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Now, reflect on the goal you identified. How well does the goal you identified connect to your values? If several of your top values connect to your goal, then you are likely to be more motivated to achieve that goal. If not, then you may want to revise your goal so that it is more connected to what is important to you. Finally, try to translate your definition of your most important values into a narrative statement that describes a potential career goal for you to strive toward. For example, if you value autonomy, creativity, economic rewards,
good physical health, and helping others, your narrative statement could be something like the following:

I desire a career in which I will work independently, have the opportunity to create something to help others, earn a salary of at least $75,000 per year, and have enough free time for activities such as yoga and rock climbing.

Your statement only needs to incorporate your values; do not worry about identifying a specific occupation. That can happen later. For now, it is enough to capture your values, as you define them, in your narrative statement. This provides a starting place for further reflection and visioning—steps we will discuss later in the book.

Now, look back over what you have written. Are there ways that you are expressing each of these values in your life currently? If not, what can you do to change this? If you value living a healthy lifestyle, for example, what is your diet like? How often do you exercise? Are there changes you can make so that your life more fully reflects what you value? Identify any specific change you can make to increase the degree to which you express your important values in your life. Changes tend to be either to do more of something or to do less of something. One example could be something like increasing the number of days you exercise each week from two to four. Or, you could decide to eat less red meat and more salads. As you identify specific changes, you are identifying pathways toward achieving your goal, which in this case is increasing the degree to which you express your important values in your life activities. Pathways are specific steps you can take in your life to increase the probability of goal achievement. Try to break your steps into small and specific steps. For instance, if I decide to increase my exercise time each week but do not belong to a gym (and want to exercise at a gym), I will first need to decide which gym I will join. This sounds obvious, but each step must be divided into smaller steps so that you have clear and specific pathways toward each goal.

Once you identify the steps you can take toward goal achievement, you must ask yourself two questions related to each specific step or pathway you have identified. First, for each step ask yourself how confident you are that you can successfully complete that step. Rate your confidence on a scale of 1 (not confident that you can successfully complete the step) to 5 (completely confident that you can successfully complete the step). If you
rate yourself 3 or lower, then you may find it helpful to discuss this with a career advisor or counselor. The focus of the conversation could be what you can do to increase your confidence. You could also examine whether your rating is accurate. That is, do you need to increase your capacity to successfully complete the steps or is your rating more fear based and not a true reflection of your ability to complete the steps you identified? You may also consider whether there are smaller steps you could take that will increase your confidence as you successfully complete them. You might decide, for instance, that while going to the gym four times per week is the eventual goal, starting with two or three times per week is more realistic and a better next step for you to take.

The second question you must ask yourself related to taking the steps you have identified to achieve your goal is whether you are likely to actually take the steps. This question relates to how motivated you are to achieve your goal. You may, for example, be completely confident that you can successfully complete the steps you identified but lack the motivation to do so. Again, rate yourself on a scale of 1 (not motivated at all) to 5 (completely motivated to take the steps you identified). If you rate yourself a 3 or lower, then it is important to consider whether the goal you identified needs to be adjusted so that it is one you are more motivated to achieve. In this case, consider again whether the goal captures qualities you truly value. Look for ways to adjust your goal so that it is more connected to your values. You also may want to discuss with a career advisor or career counselor ways to increase your motivation. It may be helpful to think about whether your beliefs are limiting your motivation. Some beliefs can be self-sabotaging (e.g., “If I take the steps I identified and am successful, others might not approve, so I will not try,” or “If I take the steps I identified and it does not work out the way I want it to, then I will be a failure”). False beliefs such as these are artificially self-limiting and fear based. Learning how to counter them with more positive, realistic, and accurate beliefs is important. For example, if you are reluctant to take the steps you identified because you fear “failure,” then you may find it helpful to redefine “failure” to focus on “learning.” If you take a step and the result is not what you wanted, then you learn important information about yourself and the goal you had identified. When you incorporate this learning into self-understanding and use it to create a new goal, you are, in fact, moving forward in positive and adaptable ways.

When it comes to career decision making, many people think you have to “know” before you can “do.” Their thinking is that you must have all the information you need and even a sort of guarantee that a choice will be
the “right one” before proceeding with a decision. This is typically an impossible goal to achieve. The fact is that it is not until you actually “do” something that you truly “know” or understand what the choice is like. There is always a knowledge gap when you implement a decision. When you are actually living in the decision—when you do it—then you have the information you need to know if the decision was an appropriate one for you. The information you gain by implementing your decision allows you to reflect on the new situation you are in and whether it is wise for you to continue with this decision or use the new information you have acquired to inform you regarding a next choice. Viewing decision making from this perspective is very different than operating from the belief that you are a failure if you make a choice and you subsequently choose to move on to another choice. In fact, taking action and learning from that action is what all “successful” people do! This point is so essential to learn that we will remind you of it throughout this book. For now, trust us, this is a very important shift that most people need to make in how they evaluate their actions.

When you have a goal defined, strategies to achieve your goal clearly clarified, the confidence that you can implement those strategies successfully, and the motivation to do so hope is inevitable. Try it out as an experiment.

**Activity 2.3 Hope-Action Thinking**

Identify a clear goal that you would like to achieve in the next 2–3 weeks. Make sure the goal is specific, clear (this will help you know if you have actually achieved the goal), and achievable. Write it in the space provided.

**Goal:**
Pathways: Identify the specific steps you can take to achieve your goal.

Confidence: On a scale from 1 (not confident at all) to 5 (completely confident) rate your level of confidence that you can complete the pathways you identified. If you rate yourself at 4 or 5, then you should proceed to take the steps you identified. If you rate yourself at 3 or below, you should discuss this with a career advisor or career counselor.

Motivation: On a scale of 1 (not motivated) to 5 (highly motivated) rate how motivated you are to complete the pathways you identified. If you rate yourself a 4 or 5, then you should proceed to take the steps you identified. If you rate yourself at 3 or below, you should discuss this with a career advisor or career counselor.

ACTIVITY 2.4 Hopeful Career State (HCS) Scale

Hopeful Career State (HCS) Scale was developed to measure your current degree of hopefulness. Follow the directions to learn more about your current situation in relation to your future career. Yoon et al. (2019) found that the higher your score is, the more engaged you will be at work. Greater work engagement connects to greater job satisfaction. In addition, by completing the activities provided in this book you will also increase your hopefulness.
Directions

For each item, rate how true each of the statements is for you using the response scale shown. For example, if the statement is somewhat true for you, put the number 3 in the blank.

**Definitely false:** 1  **Somewhat false:** 2  **Somewhat true:** 3  **Definitely true:** 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. My current work (and/or education) will be helpful for my future career.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My current work (and/or education) will enable me to be a better worker in the future.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I feel that I am getting closer to better career opportunities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I can think of new employment options because of my current job (and/or program of study).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. My current job (and/or education) provides resources (e.g., skill development, network, finances) for next steps in my career journey.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What I am doing now will help me to build a better career future.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What I am doing now is helping me to build skills and experience for the future.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. What I am doing now is an important step in my career journey.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I am hopeful that what I am doing now will help me in my career journey.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mean score (Total score)**

Scoring Instructions

1. Add up your scores for each of the HCS items to determine your total score for the nine items.
2. Divide your total score by nine in order to identify your mean or average score.
3. Record the mean score in the mean score section of the following table. The “Meaning and Action Steps” section of the table helps you understand your current score and explains how this book can help you create hope and develop your career.

### Understanding Your Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YOUR SCORE (X)</th>
<th>MEANING AND ACTION STEPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X ≤ 2.5</td>
<td>You perceive that your current situation in relation to your career development is not hopeful. You are having difficulties identifying future career options. You may be wondering how your current education and/or work situation connects to future possibilities. There is good news! This book will help you become more hopeful about your situation as you increase your self-understanding and then use this increased understanding to envision future possibilities. Actively implementing action items that you will generate while completing the activities in this book will enhance your hopefulness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 &lt; X &lt; 3.5</td>
<td>You experience a mix of positives and challenges in your current situation. There is good news for you! This book will help you see the opportunities in your current situation. Specifically, the activities in this book will help you identify ways to turn your current challenges into learning opportunities that you can use to inform your next choice. This approach is key to making good decisions. This book will guide you through the process of increasing your self-understanding, using your increased self-understanding to envision a future you are excited about, and then making plans that will lead you to implementing a decision that will provide you with additional information about yourself and future possibilities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

We need hope to move forward positively in our lives. Many of us have times in our lives when hope is hard to muster. In these times, planning for our future seems pointless. We feel stuck and unmotivated at these times. There are, however, strategies for generating and sustaining hope in our lives. These strategies are easily learned and can be quickly applied. This chapter reviews those steps. We encourage you to try them out. See the difference they can make for you. Hope fuels planning and our goal in this book is to not only fuel your planning but to help you develop a plan. The steps we will teach you in subsequent chapters, just like the strategies we have addressed in this chapter, are lifelong steps you can take to put your hope into action.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Identify three goals to achieve in the next 7 days. Identify specific steps to take in order to achieve each of these goals. Review these steps with a mentor, teacher, career advisor, or trusted friend. Ask them if they know of additional steps you could take to achieve each of your goals. Consider all the possibilities. Then, choose specific steps to take. Before you do, however, ask yourself if you are confident that you can complete the steps you identified successfully. Then ask whether you are truly motivated to take the steps. Discuss your responses with a mentor, teacher, career advisor, or trusted friend.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YOUR SCORE (X)</th>
<th>MEANING AND ACTION STEPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.5 ≤ X</td>
<td>You are highly hopeful when you think about your future because you can find numerous opportunities that lead to future possibilities you are excited about. In addition, you feel that your current environment is supportive. By completing this book, you will be able to find and develop concrete strategies and tactics that you can apply in your current and future career. This can lead you to sustain your positive outlook about your situation in relation to your future career.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Be intentional about saying three positive things to yourself about yourself over the next week. Practice this once in the morning and once in the evening. Pay attention to what this experience is like for you. Consider recording your thoughts in a journal. Note how you feel throughout the week.

References


