**Introduction**

In consideration of the underlying premises of C.R. Snyder’s hope theory (1991), as well as the emerging psychological and social benefits of hope-based practices, this poster seeks to explore how we can apply hope theory in our lives and personal and professional practices in ways that are interactive, dynamic, and tangible. Specifically, this poster highlights individual experiences with Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH), a unique person-centered planning tool, which helps individuals, groups, and communities to build hope and foster self-discovery. This tool was first developed by Jack Pearpoint, John O’Brien, and Marsha Forest (1991) as a method of facilitating individuals in exploring their dreams and goals, and developing a working vision toward positive and possible futures in supportive, collaborative, and inclusive ways. To date, PATH has been used in a multitude of settings, and has served as a dynamic and creative way to bring people together in the interest of hope and healing. It was created and named in the spirit of humility, as its creators envisioned, to “assist people walking the road to a more just society.” This poster illustrates, through the shared experiences of PATH participants, the ways in which the PATH process can be considered to visually embody and bring to life hope theory.

**Theoretical Framework**

Hope = Agency + Pathways (the Will and the Way)

**Methods**

The culminating personal artifact of the individual participants — a personalized PATH plan for both individual and professional development — provides a concrete ‘pathway’ to goals, which symbolically represents the tenets of hope theory. The proposed hypothesis is that as participants use this artifact to identify and explore their goals further, they will gain confidence and skill in setting goals and establishing specific measurable steps to reach them. As such, they will be more likely to remain motivated and maintain a positive sense of well-being conducive to overall life satisfaction and sense of self-agency.

PATH — The PATH begins with focus groups or individual participants, and a support circle called the Dream Team, typically consisting of 8-12 people who know the pathfinder and are invested in their journey. The PATH utilizes a structured planning process whereby each step moves the pathfinder closer to realizing the dream. Beginning with the end in mind, PATH facilitators first help pathfinder create a dream or ideal picture. A graphic recorder works collaboratively with the facilitator creating a visual of the dream, which continues to guide the PATH process throughout.

In the next phase, Positive and Possible, pathfinders imagine the achievement of some of their dreams and aspirations within a specific timeframe that is selected by the pathfinder and their Dream Team. Values are explored at this point to help guide the journey and qualify the purpose of each aspiration. The pathfinder’s current situation, or Now, is explored with the facilitator to give the pathfinder a sense of where they are currently in the pursuit of the larger dream and goals. At this juncture, the pathfinder and Dream Team think about other individuals from their reality; community, or professional networks they or the pathfinder may need to assist and guide them on their PATH; and what specific contributions those individuals can make. In the final step, the pathfinder and Dream Team discuss the strength, knowledge, and personal qualities of the pathfinder that can be used throughout the process to help them remain motivated to overcome barriers and complete tasks. Lastly, a plan of action is specified whereby specific dates are set to achieve milestones toward the overarching dream and goals. The first step in each of the milestone is discussed with the group, and appropriate action steps are delegated.

**Results**

One of the unique advantages about hope-based treatment is the allowance given to people to shape their own lives through supportive, goal-directed processes that promote positive selves. The results of the PATH process, as expressed by participants, indicate that, when presented with an opportunity to align their wisdom and energies towards the common goal of “developing hopeful potentials” for the future, individuals become empowered to take charge of their own lives. The bold and beautiful visuals PATH offers through the use of objects, personal photographs and drawings, pictures from magazines, and pastels and oils, aid an individual or group of pathfinders in the creation of a unique pictorial representation of their process. The ability to ‘see’ the process “graphically and in living color” helps pathfinders to lend both a voice and a vision to: (1) their purposes, (2) their understanding of their situation and its possibilities for hopeful action, and (3) their actions for change, mutual support, personal and team development, and learning (Pearpoint, O’Brien, & Forest, 2011, p. 5).

Bearing these points in mind, it is suggested that PATH be explored further as a tool to make hope theory more accessible to diverse populations and to foster hopeful thinking in creative and colorful ways. Suggested direction for future studies using PATH include collection and evaluation of additional qualitative data, such as interviews and focus groups, as well as assessment of the process to assess long-term effects on the hope levels of PATH participants when compared with community samples. Voices of prior PATH participants indicate promising implications for the combined use of hope theory and PATH, and enhance our understanding of pathfinding approaches to fostering hopeful thinking and facilitating positive growth and change.

**Future Implications**

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**Feedback from Pathfinders and Dream Teams:**

- “Great to be creative and optimistic together!”
- “Finally have a plan to fulfill steps!”
- “[I feel] excited to accomplish our goals!”
- “PATH illuminated Love, Peace, and Hope”
- “[I feel] happy that his dreams are being acknowledged!”
- “Very informative… Great teamwork!”
- “Energizing experience!”
- “This was fun!”
- “[This promotes] accountability… recharging!”
- “Love the visual! Easy to see the ‘Whole Picture’…”
- “[This process] expands his horizons to make his life more fulfilling.”
- “[I am] happy that we’re making structure [necessary to meet goals]!”
- “Before this process, I was [am] undisciplined and confused… After this process, I feel renewed… more confident.”

**References**

3. Jack Pearpoint, John O’Brien, and Marsha Forest (1991). As a result, they will be more likely to remain motivated and maintain a positive sense of well-being conducive to overall life satisfaction and sense of self-agency.

**PATHWAYS TO HOPE**

**An Innovative Approach to Fostering Hopeful Thinking**

**Tiffany A. Miner, University of New Mexico**

**Methods**

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