



## Wellbeing Insight

### A Tribute to Hope

To maintain confidence in my speaking skills post-retirement, I have joined the Toastmasters' Club. A recent speech that I gave was to fulfill the task of *Delivering a Social Speech*. I chose to write a speech in praise of – not a person or an organisation – but to the abstract concept of 'hope.' I offered some representation of hope from different perspectives for the audience to ponder.

The first representation was the lines of William Blake from *Auguries of Innocence*:

*To see a world in a grain of sand  
And a Heaven in a Wildflower  
Hold Infinity in the Palm of your hand.  
And eternity in an hour.*

The lines are a striking representation of the interconnectedness of all things and the infinite possibilities within the smallest of things. To me, that large notion is bounteously hopeful.

I followed with the VIA Institute on Character which defines hope as 'Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.' The Institute places the character strength of hope in the Virtue category of Transcendence. Furthermore, the Transcendent Virtues help connect us to the larger universe and supply meaning. With this insightful representation, I understand the expansiveness and attraction of 'hope.' With it, we are lifted out of the everyday to the bigger picture, the one that fulfills the human need for meaning.

Next, I gave my own representation of the things I have paid attention to, the quotidian experiences, which provide hope and larger meaning:

- My neighbour sweeping the path is a meditation equivalent to the Buddhist 'raking of the sand.'
- The sun on my shoulder when walking is a blessing.
- My grandson's giggle is a dream for the future.
- The ripe strawberries on the slice of chocolate cake offered to me by my friend, is connection.
- The susurrant of the wind in the she-oak tree is peace.
- The diversity of the Peace group I attend is inclusion.
- The home-grown capsicum plant with five huge capsicums weighing it down, is abundance.
- The red rose grown from a cutting from a 50-year-old bush belonging to my mother is love, resilience and longevity.

For musician Nick Cave, it took a devastation – the death of his son – to find hope. For him 'hopelessness is not a neutral position...it is adversarial. It is the warrior emotion that can lay waste



to cynicism.' Cave's cynicism was shattered by the depth of his sorrow. And on the other side, he found hope.

For psychologist and inspirational speaker, Maria Sirois, the breath is a gesture of hope. She writes: 'Breath is the essence of life. We breathe to stay alive, to nourish the cells and organs of our body. It is the doorway to the next moment and from that the next possible future.' \*

For Christians, hope is the antidote of despair. It is the equivalent of faith.

I summarised:

- Hope for William Blake is interconnectedness and possibility!
- Hope for the VIA Institute on Character is transcendence!
- Hope for me is meaning creation!
- Hope for Nick Cave is the warrior emotion!
- Hope for Maria Sirois is the life force!
- Hope for Christians is having faith!

I concluded: by asking the question:

What does the great emotion of 'hope' represent for you?

*\*Happiness after Loss.*