

EVERYTHING FEELS HOPELESS. WHAT NOW?

Feeling hopeless can be overwhelming. Hopelessness robs you of seeing where you have control in your life, especially if you find yourself wallowing in it. It's okay to give yourself time to wallow, but it's also a good idea to think about how you are going to move forward.

Before you read on, ask yourself *what is the voice in my head saying when I feel hopeless?* This can help you figure out a way forward. Moving forward might look like changing your thoughts, changing your situation, having a conversation, or letting yourself feel something difficult like grief.

Below are some common reasons people may feel hopeless and strategies you can try to feel better.

I feel stuck or have nothing to look forward to

If you feel stuck or trapped in your life, the world around you may feel small. This is a good time to find ways to expand your horizons. Here are some actions that you can take to help you do this:

- Try a new hobby, sport, or activity.
- Take a hike or a nature walk.
- Try something different: eat a new snack, listen to different music, try a new outfit, etc.
- Do something you've always wanted to do or rediscover things that make you feel good.

I feel like I have no control over my life

When your parents, teachers, school, etc., make decisions for you, you might not agree with them, and it can feel like you have no control over your life. But you do have control in more ways than you realize. Here are some ways that you can exercise the power that you have in your life:

- Set and achieve small, short-term, or long-term goals for yourself.
- Check in with yourself and ask, What do I need? Then map out what you need to do to fulfill at least one of those needs. For example, if you need more energy, you can create a better bedtime routine.
- Figure out your likes, dislikes, and interests, and pursue them in some way. For instance, if you are interested in self-expression through style but your school has a strict dress code, you can paint your toenails or put temporary tattoos in places that aren't visible.

I feel like the world is a terrible place

Many bad things happen in this world, but many good things happen, too. If the world has you down, here are some ways that you can feel better:

- Limit your time reading or watching the news, and avoid doomscrolling on social media.
- Share what you are feeling with someone you trust – they might be able to offer perspective.
- Listen to someone share their story, or talk to someone who inspires you.
- Read an inspirational book, watch an inspirational movie, or find inspirational posts or videos on social media.

I feel overwhelmed or pressured

When you feel that you have too much to do or there are too many expectations for you, you may feel overwhelmed and want to shut down. Not only is this okay, but it's also natural.

Here's what you can do if you're feeling the pressures of daily life:

- Practice mindfulness, deep breathing, or meditation. An app can be a great place to start if you're not sure how to.
- Talk to someone about what you are feeling – sometimes getting it out of your head helps relieve the pressure.
- Is there something on your schedule or your plate that makes you feel overwhelmed? See if you can remove or change it.
- Find a healthy coping strategy that helps you release the pressure, like journaling, exercise or physical activity, creating art, etc.

I've lost someone or something that's important to me

Grief can make you feel hopeless. If you've lost someone you love or feel like you've lost your purpose in life, grief can make it difficult to keep moving forward. An important part of moving past grief is allowing yourself to move through it by letting yourself feel hard feelings and have bad days. Here are ways to deal with grief:

- Let yourself scream or "ugly cry." You don't have to hold it all together. Grief comes with difficult emotions like sadness, anger, depression, etc. Allow yourself to process what you are feeling.
- Start a grief journal. Give yourself a place to write down thoughts, feelings, and memories.
- Get support. It's hard to grieve alone. Support can look like talking to others, participating in online forums, or attending in-person support groups.
- Find a way to honor your loved one. This could look like holding an event or starting a tradition in their honor, making a social media post, etc.

If you're struggling to deal with life's challenges, 24/7 help is available. Call 988 or chat online at 988lifeline.org.



I feel like a failure

When you feel like you can't live up to the expectations of others – or the ones you set for yourself – you may feel like you are a failure. Or like you can't do anything right. But you don't have to listen to this belief. And there are ways that you can combat it:

- List examples of your accomplishments or proudest achievements.
- Celebrate your wins, both big and small. Did you get out of bed today? That's a win. Did you speak up for yourself? That's also a win.
- Talk to friends and loved ones. When you feel down, they can remind you of your greatness.

I feel lonely or like no one cares

When you feel lonely, it's a sign that you should reach out for support. Even if you don't want to or feel like it, connecting with others can help you feel better. Here are some ways you can reach out:

- Text, DM, FaceTime, or play video games with friends.
- Talk to a trusted adult like a parent, teacher, coach, etc.
- Play with a pet or a friend's pet, or spend time with animals.
- Invite a friend to hang out or go visit them.

I feel like nothing will change or get better

Feeling like nothing will change means that you may be stuck in a cycle of negative thoughts or habits. But you have the power to break cycles and move forward. Here are some ways you can practice this power:

- Create something new: write a story or song, create art, make a new dish, etc.
- Add something exciting and new, or remove something that no longer feels good from your routine.
- Talk to someone who has had a similar experience.

I don't know what I'm feeling

Sometimes you may feel hopeless, and you don't know why. That's okay. Even if you don't know why you feel the way you feel, here are some steps that can help you feel better:

- Talk to someone – a friend, a family member, a school counselor, etc.
- Reflect on and try to label what you are feeling. Are you sad, angry, frustrated, etc.?
- Take a mental health test at mhascreening.org – it can affirm your experiences and help you think about your next steps.

Feeling hopeless makes it difficult to see a way out or what to do next. **You can break free and find hope again.** Even if it doesn't feel like it, there are always steps you can take to feel better.

Learn more: mhanational.org/youth
Take a free mental health test: mhascreening.org