



Episode 73 Show Notes: Can Hope Be Leveraged As A Strategy?

Can 'hope' actually be a strategy in today's work environment? Libby Gill, the author of 'The Hope-Driven Leader: Harness the Power of Positivity at Work' thinks so. Libby defines what hope is and why it's important. She'll share the science behind hope, a medical definition, and the link between hope and mortality. Libby will explain how hope can be leveraged by HR, the pitfalls to be aware of, and an approach to harnessing hope as a strategy both personally and professionally.

Libby began her career with Embassy Communications, a television company founded by Norman Lear (creator of *All in the Family*). She survived three mergers, ultimately becoming head of Publicity and Advertising for Sony Worldwide. Libby then led Public Relations and Corporate Communications at Universal and Turner Broadcasting before becoming an entrepreneur in coaching and consulting. She founded Libby Gill and Company, a coaching company in California. For 15 years, Libby has been guiding clients through change and chaos. Libby shares her thoughts on hope and her expertise on how to best leverage hope to create a more positive and effective culture and environment.

Key Learnings From This Episode

- **What inspired Libby to write this book?** Libby has always felt that hope was her secret jet fuel. She believes that you can lose your money, health, and relationships, but if you have hope – a belief that things will get better – then things will improve. Hope enables you to leap forward with expectation. It can help you get out of bed in the morning.
- **Hope is a strategy, hope can be a plan.**
- **How do you measure hope?** Dr. Rick Snyder, a Professor at the University of Kansas, built a measurement tool called the *Adult Dispositional Hope Scale*. It was the first assessment tool designed to measure hope – the ability to connect with the future. Hope is having a realistic sense of what is doable and attainable, and having the willpower to get there.



- **What is the medical definition of hope?** This may be best understood from Dr. Jerome Groopman, an early AIDS researcher, and Harvard Chair and oncologist who said that ‘hope is the fundamental belief that change is possible, and it is the expectation that it is the actions of the individual that drives the outcome’. It is about linking belief with behavior. When you say, ‘this’ and act upon it, hope is the action.
- **Consider your values and belief system.** Not everyone stops to think about what they believe. You need to do a ‘gut check’. Where do you spend your time and money? Where do you put most of your energy? Look at your calendar. Look at your financial statements. That is your trail. That is your belief set. Are these connected to where you want to go?
- **How did hope evolve into a strategy?** When you look at people who have dealt with long-term illness, it is clear that patients and family members need to participate in the healing process. Doctors found that when people were given too much information, it overwhelmed and shut them down. Similarly, in the business world, when people are hit over the head with too much information, (e.g., when feedback during the annual appraisal process is a surprise and shock), it is too much, and people shut down. If you over-correct and give too little information, in the case of patients, it gave a false sense of hope. People believe no news is good news. There needs to be a balance - what is real, what is practical?
- **Hope and Mortality.** When we participate and believe hope is possible, we release brain chemicals necessary to suppress pain and to boost the immune system. A study on the link of mortality and hopefulness found a significant correlation in people who were stewards of their future – people who had a sense of what life would be like in 5, 10 or 20 years. Hopeful people took better care of their health, they saved money. They also found that a large number of people who were ‘hopeless’ died at a younger age. When people believe they are going to be around for a while, they plan and protect for that.



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LIBBY GILL // EP.73

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- **How does this body of science align with the people and processes that HR works with every day?** HR is the holder of culture. HR can set an example. Social behaviors are contagious. If HR sets the tone intentionally, the way a conversation begins is the way that interaction is left. Start with a solution, e.g., ‘we can do this, we can figure this out together’. Creativity will fire up. Begin at a high level of expectation. Set the tone that all things are possible. HR should not be the soul crushers or corporate cops. Communicate the benefit and connect it directly to the individual and his/her future. Get people on board.
- **How Can HR Model Hope?** Are there strategies for how HR leaders can be more intentional in modeling this hope-filled, future-focused approach? It is important to take care of yourself. HR professionals are the healers and helpers of the world. They are humble to a fault. HR needs to occasionally shine a light on their accomplishments to ensure the HR team feels great and purposeful. Don’t undersell HR’s value.
- **HR has its day job. Step outside of that. What do you want to have happen in a year?** You can move the needle on people and development – build the bench strength of the next wave of leaders, start internship and mentorship programs, address women’s issues. Be clear on vision, back into it, and reverse engineer it, in terms of years, months and weeks. Step out and think about what else you can do. Clarify the vision, simplify the pathway, remove the extraneous, bring in the necessary, and execute the plan. It’s all about execution, accountability, measurement, and partners to help you stay the course. Find a way to the future. This is the essence of a good coaching plan. Coaching is an investment in a valued employee’s future.
- **Sometimes it is difficult to see a way to the future – there is hopelessness.** The more HR can help in visualizing a positive future and communicating what leaders see for their people, and helping people see what they are capable of with the right resources, tools, and training, people will begin to visualize what is ahead and what is possible.
- **Are there obstacles or downsides of hope as a strategy?** If you don’t attach actions to the vision, then you are operating on blind faith and false hope. In the corporate world, however, there are typically enough checks and balances to keep this from happening. Paint an attainable picture, but a lofty one.
- Albert Einstein said, ‘**Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow**’.



Recommended Reading and References From this Episode

- [Libby Gill's website.](#)
- [The Hope-Driven Leader: Harness the Power of Positivity at Work](#) by Libby Gill. The first chapter is available for download on the episode show notes page.
- [Traveling Hopefully: How to Lose Your Family Baggage and Jumpstart Your Life](#) by Libby Gill
- [The Anatomy of Hope: How People Prevail in the Face of Illness](#) by Jerome Groopman, M.D.
- [Change or Die: Could you change when change matters most?](#) By Alan Deutschman
- [You Unstuck: Mastering the New Rules of Risk-taking in Work and Life](#) by Libby Gill

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