

### How Hope Happens

In ancient Greek mythology, one story describes how Zeus gives the first created man and woman a gift of a wooden box. Zeus instructed them to safeguard the gift and not to open the box. But Pandora, who was naturally curious, opened the box and out escaped all the evil into the world. The only thing that remained was hope; she quickly closed the lid just in time to keep it inside. Many assume the moral of the story is: *Be careful when opening something we're not prepared to face.* The expression "*don't open Pandora's box*" relates to this warning. But for the ancient Greeks, the story meant entirely something else. They understood that without hope all is lost.

Hope is a cherished belief that something good will happen. Hope is most often connected to something positive. The "*aha*" moment of recovery is often followed if not preceded by a feeling of hope that we "can get better," "have a better life," and/or get "a brighter future." The power of hope harnesses energy needed for the hard work of recovery to begin. We need only to think about the placebo phenomenon to begin to understand the potential cognitive,

emotional, and physiological positive impacts that hope can have.

For some of us, it can seem risky to hope if we've experienced a lot of great letdowns. Or some of us may find it difficult to draw on hope if we're surrounded by daunting circumstances or living in an unsupportive environment. But many of us can point to our own experience or that of others where hope breached the strongest fortress and entered the darkest corners. Sometimes all it takes to allow hope to come in is to change the direction we're looking. As someone once said, "When we start to change the way we look at things, the things we look at will start to change. And as holocaust survivor, Viktor Frankl, said, "When we are no longer able to change a situation - we are challenged to change ourselves."

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A time when hope actually changed my life was when:

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