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Pescadero, California

Reconnecting with Hope

For the past 20+ years, I have immersed myself in the work of helping people build their influence skills so that their ideas could be heard. I believe ideas can change the world for the better, and I have felt grateful to play a small role in supporting people in doing this. But in order to create positive change, you have to have a hopeful mindset, the inspiration to come up with the idea, the passion for its success and the skill and determination to get others committed to implementing it. But whew! All of this takes enormous energy and as I checked in with myself and listened to leaders in my client organizations, I realized what I was feeling and hearing was the opposite of hope and inspiration.

People were unsettled, uneasy, overwhelmed and disillusioned. Between the rising gun violence epidemic highlighted by Uvalde and Buffalo, ongoing Covid-19 infections, the war in Ukraine, inflation rates, an uncertain job market, recent supreme court decisions, supply

chain issues and back to office whiplash, there are plenty of reasons to feel concerned for the future. It has been difficult for me to stay motivated and maintain a sense of hope amidst the madness but I also know the only way to influence positive change is through grounded hope, inspiration and a passion for a different way. So the question became: how do I/we regain those feelings? For me, I decided to be silent, be alone and go to the sea.

I picked up Anne Morrow Lindbergh's *Gift from the Sea*, which confronts the trappings of modernity and helps readers find a space for contemplation and creativity within their own lives. Despite the book being published in 1955, it contains messages that are still applicable today. As I perused the pages, I was inspired to drive my van Hope to the sea in an effort to ground myself; In an effort to remember I was good enough and that what I was doing in life mattered; In an effort to regain the feeling of hope and optimism that comes from noticing the good and believing that the majority of people in the world want the same thing: more good for humankind and the planet. I parked and stayed overnight at a place without reception so that I could disconnect, go on a beautiful hike, breathe in the ocean air and just...be.

My presence there reminded me of the airplane oxygen mask rule: take care of yourself before addressing the needs of others. I am of no use to others if I am of no use to myself, and no amount of pushing through the pain would benefit me or those around me. So I gave myself the time and space to reconnect with myself, to reground myself, to see myself, to appreciate myself, to love myself.

In order to influence positive change in others and make a lasting impact, we must first influence a hopeful mindset within ourselves. For me that mindset shift comes in the form of nature, silent reflection, reading and seeing beauty. For others, it could be something entirely different.

Whatever struggles we face, whether it be with work, mental or physical health, personal relationships, or a combination of all four, we must first put our own oxygen mask on and breathe deeply. This is especially true for leaders who oversee team(s) of people. When leaders put themselves at risk, they put their business and their employees at risk as well. The more we learn to take care of ourselves, to prioritize our needs, the greater capacity we will have to create positive change for everyone.

Ask yourself:

- What in my life makes me feel hopeful right now?
- Where in my life have I lost hope?
- What do I need in order to feel strong, grounded and hopeful?
- What requests do I need to make to get what I need?
- What is one small step I can take today to influence positive change within myself?

If you need additional sources of inspiration, here are a few that have recently helped me:

- *The Book of Hope* by Jane Goodall and Douglas Abrams
- [One Small Step Website](#)
- [Maria Shriver's Sunday Paper](#)

“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness” – Desmond Tutu

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