



MAY NEWSLETTER

How To Cultivate Hope



“A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity: an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.” - Winston Churchill.

If you turn on the nightly news the world seems like a dire place to be.

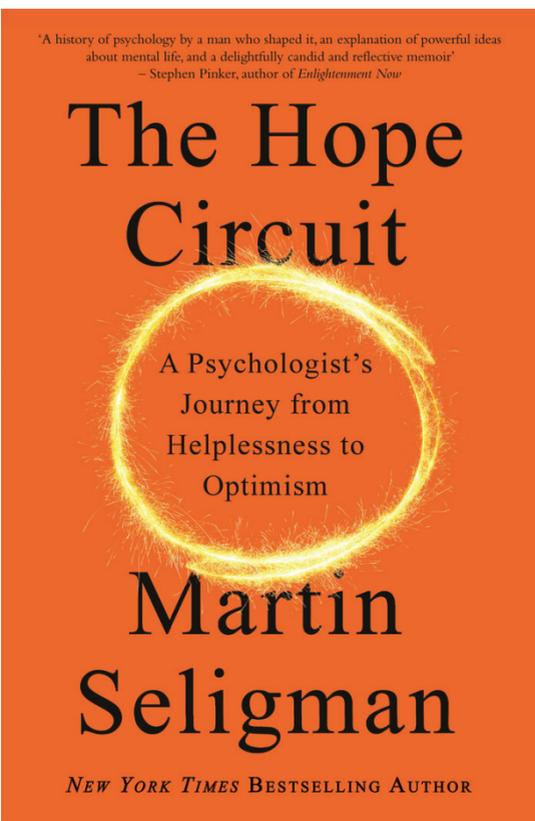
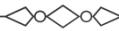
Whilst there is suffering, statistically society is improving:

- 200 years ago only 10% of the population was literate, now nearly 90% is
- In 1990 more than 1/3 of the worlds population lived in poverty, today it is 1/10
- Violent crime is decreasing, life expectancy is increasing
- 90% of all children world wide attend primary school

So how can we be more hopeful? We know that our brains are hardwired for catastrophe. From an evolutionary perspective we needed to be on the look out for danger to survive. However now that danger is less present. According to Seligman (2011), optimism can be learned. Strategies to improve optimism include:

1. Practicing gratitude. For instance What Went Well- WWW: writing down 3 things that went well in your day before bed
2. Adopting helpful self-talk. Noticing when you don't fee great. Stopping and focusing on your self-talk. Are you saying things that are helping you to feel good and achieve what you would like? If your thoughts are not helpful, you can challenge and replace them with more helpful thoughts. Some challenges include:
 - Are you catastrophising?
 - How else could you look at it?
 - What would a friend say?
 - Where is the evidence?
 - What's a more helpful thought?

Research shows that ‘optimistic children show more persistence in tasks and achieve more academic success than children lacking in optimism’ (Fox Eades, 2010). So next time a student is pessimistic about a task ask them "Are your thoughts helping you? What would be a more helpful thought? What character strength could help?"



Book Recommendation

Seligman's autobiography of how he learnt to study optimism and overcome depression.

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Warmest wishes,
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