



# NSW COUNTRY RUGBY UNION REFEREES ASSOCIATION

## MATCH OFFICIAL DEVELOPER RESOURCES

### Hope and its impact: Tips on the What, Why and How

**Hope** is a lofty concept - a bit elusive and hard to measure. It is something nice to aspire to and enjoy but not something to think about all that much perhaps. There is too much to do in the present to hope about the future so we just get on with it.

Well it seems that there may be more to hope than just 'wishful thinking'...

So just how is hope being defined?

"Hope is defined as the perceived ability to produce pathways to achieve desired goals and to motivate oneself to use those pathways." Rand.K. & Cheavens J. (2009) Hope theory. (Think of this in a refereeing context.)

The concepts in this definition emphasise just how important coaching approaches, whether in formal coaching sessions or in less formal everyday conversations, can be in building hope. These dimensions - **goals, pathways, commitment and motivation** are central to coaching conversations. Why might 'hope' be worth some further attention?

In a recently published study (again, Rand and Cheavens), researchers reviewed 45 studies examining hope in the workplace from the past 20 years. In all, more than 11,000 employees, from ages 20 to 55, and with 2 to 16 years of work experience, were represented. A number of significant correlations were identified:

- Employees with more hope had increased employee performance, as measured by supervisor ratings, self-ratings, and objective performance ratings.
- More hopeful employees had increased happiness, job satisfaction, and commitment to their organization.
- Employees with more hope had better physical and mental health and well-being.
- Last, and not surprisingly, the least hopeful employees had the most job stress and burnout.

So, hope it seems correlates with highly desirable outcomes that we would probably all like to see more of in the various organisations in which we lead and work.

How might we bolster hope? (... among our referees so that it becomes a reality)

Some of the following suggestions might be helpful here:

In your conversations be goal or outcome focused. **Keep drawing attention to what's wanted.** Even when people express their 'what's wanted' in negative terms help them reframe in clear positive ways. For example:

"What would you like to have happen?" (Q)  
"I don't want to be so controlled by my emotions." (A)  
"So, what would you want instead of that?" (Q)

A corollary of this: **Avoid analysing the past**, especially over-analysis of a problem or event that did not quite go as planned. Take the key lessons and move on to how it might be done differently next time. **Build 'pathways thinking'** – pathways thinking refers to the ability to generate various routes from the present to the desired future. Helping people generate options and possibilities even if not all brilliant and innovative with guarantees of success is still useful. A choice between some just OK alternatives is better than no choice at all and just getting some possibilities on the table will sometimes spark better

ones! As author Gil Fronsdau has commented, “People who do not see their choices do not believe they have choices”. Just highlighting possibilities and listing them down can be a helpful way of promoting pathways thinking.

**Build ‘agency thinking’** – agency thinking refers to the level of intention, confidence and ability to follow those various pathways towards the desired future. A focus on looking for ‘exceptions’ – any instance where situations similar to the presenting challenge has been successfully dealt with – even a little bit, can strengthen the sense of resourcefulness. Drawing attention to progress so far even if this is only small can also help build agency thinking.

**Draw attention to any signs of progress...and amplify.** Drawing attention to progress so far even if this is only small can also help build agency thinking. Inviting further reflection on how this progress has been achieved and amplifying it can highlight this even further.

*This article written by John Campbell, founding director, Growth Coaching International.*