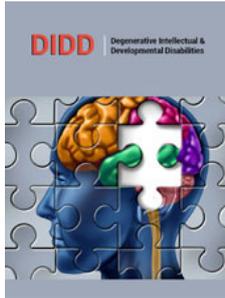


Hope: The Human Spirit

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Commentary



We live in a world where we need real hope and new directions to live productive and happy lives. There is too much fear and anticipation that can limit the robustness of the human spirit. Let's change that. The simple truth is the universe has been expanding from the beginning of time, as is also true of our consciousness. A little over 100 years ago in 1919, during the Spanish Flu pandemic, Edwin Hubble became an astronomer. He was fascinated to look through powerful telescopes at distant universes. Could he have been looking for hope? After 10 years, at the time of the Great Depression, he made a critical discovery that the universe is expanding with the Big Bang Theory. This became Hubble's Law [1] that states that *"the greater the distance of the Galaxy is from ours the faster it recedes as proof that the universe is expanding."* Hubble persevered to find new hope and communicate it to the entire world.

During the 1949 recession, Canadian psychologist, and father of neuropsychology, Donald Hebb [2] made a discovery of hope that *"neurons that fire together, wire together."* In other words, what we focus our minds on repeatedly has a direct influence on good mental and physical health by creating robust default neuronal pathways in the brain.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought us to our knees, requiring a step up and out of old patterns that no longer work and to welcome new more adaptable and creative ideas. Reviewing histories of hope can stimulate excitement of new beginnings. German theologian Rudolf Otto [3] synthesized the unifying factor of all religions and spiritual practices to be the *Numinosum - that which is tremendous, fascinating and mysterious* - as a guiding principle for what makes a satisfying inner life. Being stuck in the past wanting things to "go back to the way they were" is an absolute impossibility as life continually moves forward according to the expanding Big Bang Theory. Can we expand our ever-growing consciousnesses to focus on "abilities" rather than dis-abilities and respect the best in ourselves and those around us? I believe we can.

We live in an emerging world that changes through time-seconds, minutes, hours, months, seasons, years -through gene expression and brain plasticity [4,5]. NOW truly is the time to rethink how to make disabilities become abilities. How can we reframe tragedy and loss to nudge the hopeful numinosum into a more satisfying life?

In light of the shock of grief and loss in pandemics, and beyond, an opportunity arises to rediscover and reassert who we are, where we have been, and where we are going. In grief, tidal waves of flooding memories may catapult us into the past, coupled with future fears of the unknown. The present moment, where happiness lies, is often elusive. There are eight dimensions of embodied grief to consider in transitioning from grief into peace: emotional, social, cognitive, physical, behavioral, cultural, spiritual, and philosophical [6]. Working through these dimensions takes time and dedication. The kindness of nature offers opportunities to heal and process problems twelve times a day in ~90-120-minute increments through the 4-Stage Creative Cycle [7].

The 4-Stages range from (1) questions or concerns, (2) working through confusion and complexity, and if all goes well (3) to have a breakthrough moment(s) of clarity, insight,

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and direction followed by a burst of creativity based on this breakthrough, before (4) applying this new wisdom into daily life. Often people come to therapy stuck in the equivalent of Stage Two - the continuing spirals of self and other examination, sometimes deeply frustrated and emotional. It takes courage to let go of fear and journey through the difficult parts of Stage Two. Nature builds a rest in each ultradian that often lasts for ~20 minutes. The active searching and sometimes painful phase lasts for ~20 minutes. What you do not solve in one 90–120-minute ultradian cycle you may in the next. Every week offers 84 chances to find a productive resolution to life's perplexing problems. A season has over 1000 chances to come to peace and grow into the person you hope to be, for a satisfying life in higher consciousness [8].

Understanding that both the universe and personal consciousness continues to expand over a lifetime gives real hope to expect and look for the best ability in ourselves and others. Adapting an open-minded curiosity to effectively use our minds to focus on interesting, numinous, and expanding ideas literally allows our brain neurons to grow, wire, and rewire to today's interesting new world. Appreciating how time heals daily and hourly through the 4-Stage Creative Cycle opens a freedom to fearlessly become the person we hope to be.

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