

Decide



Prepare



# Hope Based Planning

A Self-help Tool

## Introduction

Matt Haig says that ‘Nothing is more powerful than a small hope that doesn’t give up.’ (2022, p7.). Hope is about having a positive approach to the future, even when we face difficulties.

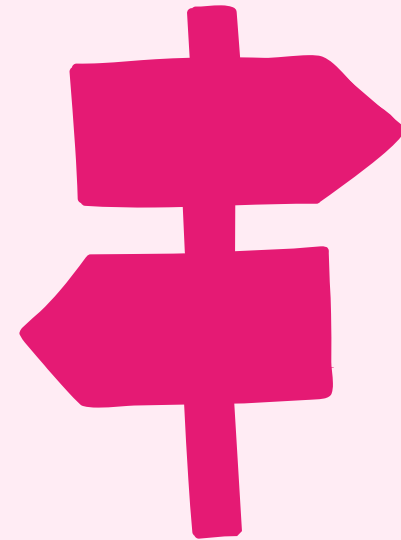
Hope can come in different forms:

- Dispositional hope (some people just seem naturally hopeful).
- Situational hope (where a positive outcome looks probable based on the situation).
- Behavioural hope (where you deliberately behave in a hopeful way).

This Self-help Tool invites you to take small practical steps that express your choice to act hopefully, even if you are facing a difficult situation.

Hope has many benefits. According to Feldman et al (2023), ‘Hope has been identified as an important factor in both psychological and physical healthcare.’ It is also associated with improved academic outcomes (Houston, 2019 citing Rand & Cheavens, 2012, and Snyder et al, 2002) and ‘overall life satisfaction’ (Houston, 2019, citing Roesch & Vaughn, 2006).

Hope plays a special role in enabling us to overcome challenges. Houston, 2019 (drawing on Conti, 2000) states that, ‘Hope is a motivational factor that helps initiate and sustain action toward long-term goals, including the flexible management of obstacles that get in the way of goal attainment.’



But how can we use hope to help us?

Snyders' Hope Theory (Feldman, et al, 2023, citing Synder 1994, 2002) identifies three key components:

- Goals (having things we want to do).
- Agency thoughts (belief that we can make a difference).
- Pathways thinking (finding different ways to achieve our goals).

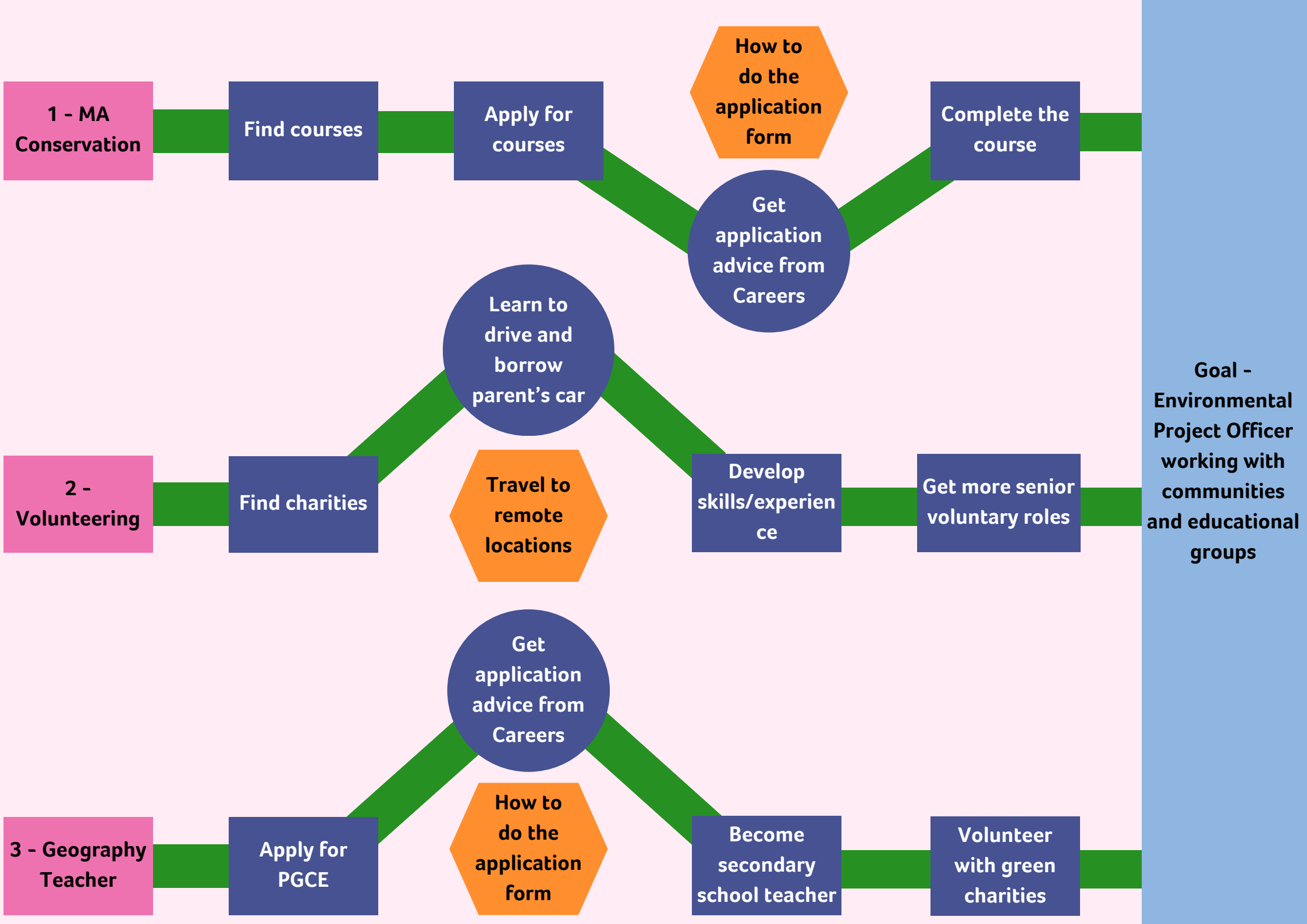
This Self-help Tool focuses on how you can use 'pathways thinking' to find a route to success and maintain a hopeful outlook by creating your own 'Hope Map'.

Hope Maps are a type of action plan. Hope maps are special because they:

- Show several routes to reaching the same goal.
- Anticipate obstacles that might occur.
- Identify how to overcome the obstacles.

In the simplified example below, we have used Canva, but you can use any software you like, or draw yours by hand on an A4 sheet of paper (landscape). And, of course, make yours as detailed as you need to.





## This tool is designed to...

- Help you plan different ways to reach your goals.
- Help you overcome potential challenges by planning how to deal with them in advance.
- Help you to feel positive and motivated about achieving your future goals.

## Consider using this tool if you...

- Want to feel more hopeful about your chances of success.
- Want to respond flexibly to challenges and obstacles.
- Want to compare different ways to reach your goals.



# How to use this Self-help Tool



**First, identify the goal you want to work towards.**

Put your goal in the right-hand side of your map. This is where you want to get to in the future.

**Second, plan 3 ways of reaching your goal.**

For this part of your plan, you may need to do some careers research (possibly using the Prospects website) or get advice from someone in the Careers team.

Put each route into one of the rectangular boxes. Write this as an overall description. For instance: 'Working my way up', 'Graduate Training Scheme', 'Taking a Masters', or 'Doing a Degree Apprenticeship'.

Then break each route down into the key steps; the individual components or stages. Give each separate action its own square box and place this in the relevant route.





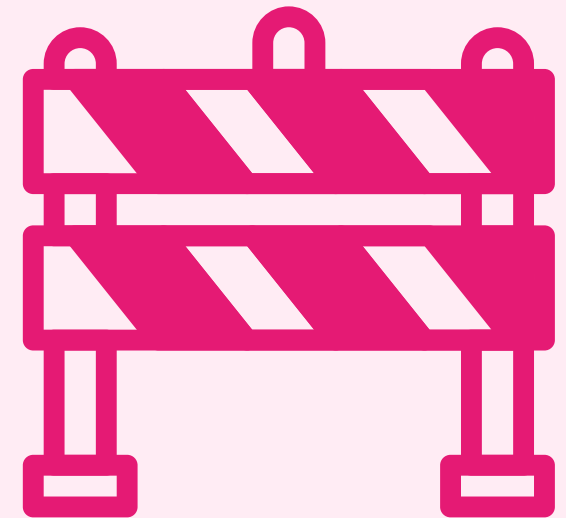
### **Third, think about what obstacles could affect each route.**

With any plan there are always some things that might go wrong or threaten to knock you off-course. Research shows that identifying these in advance and working out how to fix these problems can help increase the chances of being able to achieve your goals (Bailey, 2017 citing Kwasnicka et al, 2013.)

**Write each problem in a hexagon (one per hexagon). Put each hexagon in the relevant route, showing where and when it is likely to occur.**

Then think how you might overcome each obstacle. This might mean:

- Avoiding the problem occurring in the first place.
- Reducing its impact.
- Solving the problem so it does not hold you back.
- Identifying someone (like a Careers Advisor) who is likely to be able to help you.



Try to find a solution (even if it is a partial solution) to each obstacle.

Write each solution in its own box. Use the circle shape for this. Put the solutions into the relevant pathway to show how you could get round an obstacle and continue to make progress.

Try to explain (to yourself or someone else) how your potential solution will work. This is a good discipline as it will help show if this is a well thought through solution, or if you need to do a bit more thinking to make sure its viable (Grant, 2021 p92, citing Fernbach et al, 2013).





# Pause, Reflect, Act

- How do you feel looking at the different routes?
- How does having more than one solution affect your situation?
- Which route looks most doable?
- When do you want to get going?
- What else might you do to keep positive and hopeful about the future?
- Who could help you to take forwards your plan?
- What immediate actions do you need to take now to build on this exercise?
- Are there other related Self-help Tools you would like to use as well?



**NB: Because everyone is different, this tool may not work for you, so please look at our other Self-help Tools as well. Others that are likely to be relevant include:**

- Power Ups – simple steps to feel more positive about each day.
- Three Doors – is it really impossible to achieve your career goal?
- Best Possible Future Selves – imagining yourself in a future life, using a creative writing exercise.

# References and Resources

- Feldman, D.B., Jazaieri, H., O'Rourke, M.A. et al. Healthcare Professionals' Lay Definitions of Hope. *J Happiness Stud* 24, 231–247 (2023). <https://doi-org.libaccess.hud.ac.uk/10.1007/s10902-022-00589-0>
- Grant, A. (2021). *Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know*. Penguin.
- Haig, M. (2022). *The Comfort Book*. Canongate.
- Houston, E. (27 Aug, 2019). What is Hope in Psychology. [PositivePsychology.com](https://www.positivepsychology.com). Accessed, 10.11.2023: [What is Hope in Psychology + 7 Exercises & Worksheets \(positivepsychology.com\)](https://www.positivepsychology.com/what-is-hope-in-psychology-7-exercises-worksheets)
- Kwasnicka D, Presseau J, White M, Sniehotta FF. Does planning how to cope with anticipated barriers facilitate health-related behaviour change? A systematic review. *Health Psychol Rev.* 2013;7:129-145.

If you are a member of staff from another educational organisation and want to use a limited number of our Self-help Tools with your students, we would love to hear from you and share good practice. We would ask that you retain references to University of Huddersfield as a matter of courtesy and acknowledge the other sources we have used. Thank you.