



Hope springs eternal

Success is said to be about talent, luck and hard work. But dreams also play a big part in our lives, as students learned in a Women's Foundation Life Skills workshop

WE all want to know how we can be successful. Sure, there may be elements of talent and luck. But more importantly, it is all about hard work and **resilience**. In life, the ability to get back up after falling time after time is **priceless**. In one of The Women's Foundation Life Skills workshops, students learnt the importance and benefits of cultivating hope, which can be developed and enhanced through cognitive training.

In the workshop, students played a simulation game based on Jeremy Lin's life story. Without being told

whose story it was, students were asked to choose options in each phase of Lin's life since his high school days. Even if they had Lin's talents, that did not guarantee they would reach his achievements – especially without his resilience. It is that **optimistic** attitude that affects every single step in one's life, which in turn shapes and contributes to future success or failure.

A theory on hope

ACCORDING to Professor Samuel Ho, clinical and positive psychology teacher at the City University of Hong Kong and academic advisor to the TWF Life Skills Programme, it is important to have goals, know what resources are available and what steps are needed to achieve them with the motivation to **persevere**. This is what he explains as "Hope Theory: Hope = Goals + Way power + Willpower". Lin had all of these elements, which are not exclusive to him. Research confirms that individuals who have high hopes perform better in all areas including academics, relationships, emotions and even health. Hope can be developed through cognitive training.

Students were asked to think of their own goals, and the means and motivations necessary to achieve them by going through the steps below.

Building up way power

1. Identify and prioritise goals from largest to smallest. For example, getting into university may be the large goal, but to get there may include smaller goals such as doing well in studies, engaging in meaningful extracurricular activities and researching schools.

2. Break goals down into concrete steps. For example, doing well in a certain class may require spending extra time reading, doing additional exercises or seeking help from someone.

3. Look for different ways to achieve a goal. There are universities that look for top grades in academics, while others may consider factors such as athletic, artistic or entrepreneurial achievements.

Will yourself to success

ONE also has to build up enough willpower to pursue one's goals – otherwise it will just become a dream. Here are some tips for developing willpower:

- 1. Study stories about success.** It helps to know that other people struggled to achieve their success the way they did. Ask people their stories of **struggle**. Read biographies of successful people. Be curious not just about people's successes, but what they learned from their failures.
- 2. Build up good, healthy habits.** Exercising, eating healthy and keeping diaries are all good examples.
- 3. Find peers** who share similar goals to encourage and support each other.
- 4. Reward yourself** whenever you achieve a small goal.
- 5. Expect to encounter failure!** Most importantly, have fun pursuing your goals.

Think positive

WHY is all this important? Prof. Ho explained that people who are depressed and lose their motivation have a tendency to think three kinds of thoughts about themselves and the world around them: I'm a loser, the environment is **flawed**, and things will not get any better.

But those with hope will face obstacles, such as a difficult exam or not getting into one's university of choice, with these thoughts instead: I may not be perfect, but I can improve; the situation may not be perfect, but I see some good things; and things will get better. ●

