



“Start with your own hope”: Teachers’ Experiences During the Pandemic of the Strengths, Hope and Resourcefulness Program for School Mental Health (SHARP-SMH)



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Hope is...

- An important component of resilience, consistently related to life satisfaction and subjective well-being, and necessary for healthy living^{1,2,3}.
- Vital and sustaining when in demanding and stressful workplace conditions,^{4,5} specifically in educational contexts⁶.
- An essential resource for adults working with youth, particularly in maintaining a sense of purpose in their work⁷.
- A key enhancer of performance across a broad spectrum of domains, including areas related to teaching and learning, such as physical health, academics, well-being, and psychological functioning⁸.

“A process of anticipation that involves the interaction of thinking, acting, feeling and relating, and is directed toward a future fulfillment that is personally meaningful.”

(Stephenson, 1991, p.1459)

Research Question

How did teachers’ participation in the implementation of a novel hope and strengths-focused program during the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic support their well-being and professional development?

Methods

- SHARP-SMH occurred in three phases as a participatory action research (PAR) project.

Phase I – Psychoeducational Intervention

- 35 teachers participated in the empirically supported strengths, hope, and resources-based psychoeducational intervention (SHARP)¹⁰.

Phase II – SHARP-SMH Development

- Five teachers (two elementary and three high school) joined the SHARP-SMH research team and worked collaboratively to adapt SHARP activities into SHARP-SMH lessons for use within classrooms and/or schools.

Phase III – SHARP-SMH Implementation

- Teacher researchers implemented existing and newly developed, hope-focused activities and lessons within their classrooms and/or schools.

Findings

- Six key means of supporting teacher mental health, and most specifically hope, were identified through the implementation of SHARP-SMH:

University team engagement in the classroom

Hope-focused community of practice is supportive

Hope interventions with teachers

Hope-infused lessons spark teacher hope

Professional learning and hope literacy

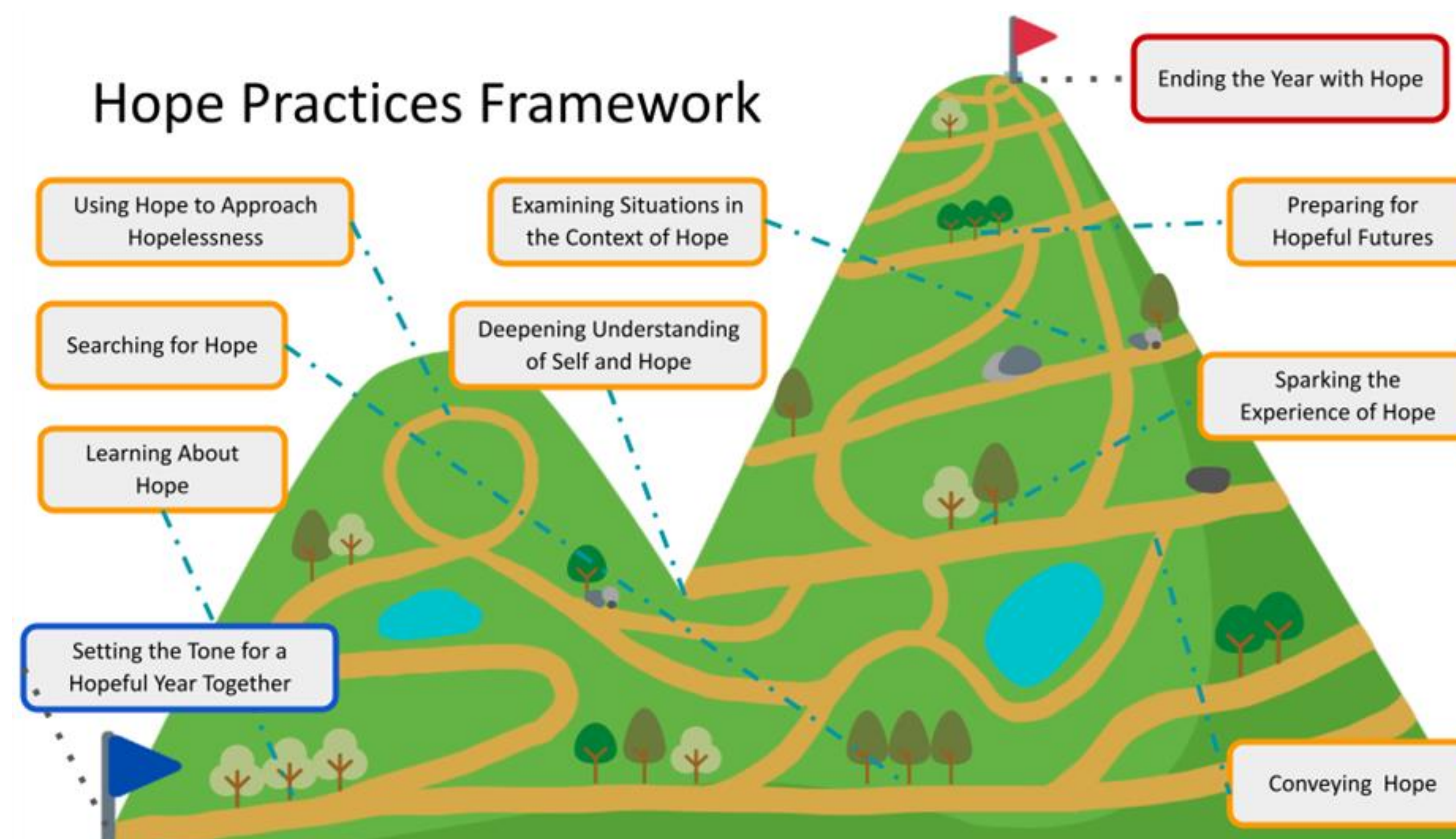
Collaborative agency via knowledge mobilization

“... [it was] one of my most hopeful things of the year. It brought me a lot of joy and happiness and reminded me of my teacher impact...bringing hope into lessons when you’re tired and burnt out was one of the ways I coped with teaching during the pandemic and struggling with your own mental health because you get that hope kick from students.”

- Teacher Researcher #2

SHARP-SMH

- The Strengths, Hope, and Resourcefulness Program for School Mental Health (SHARP-SMH) is a positive psychology program for fostering student and teacher mental health and wellbeing.
- Based on decades of research on hope at Hope Studies Central at the University of Alberta, SHARP-SMH is designed to provide sustainable, effective mental health programming in schools that is easily integrated into school curricula.



Discussion

Hope is fostered through relationships and shared purpose

- SHARP-SMH teachers’ researchers described engaging with the project positively, impacting their teaching experiences and fostering hope and well-being.

Explicit, Intentional, and Contagious

- SHARP-SMH takes an intentional and explicit approach to engaging with hope in educational contexts.
- Meeting to discuss the implementation of hope within classrooms and schools bolstered and strengthened team members’ sense of hope through shared difficulty, new perspectives, inspiration, community, and support.

Professional Learning

- Hope and education are often seen as synonymous¹¹.
- With SHARP-SMH, teacher researchers increased their own hope literacy in order to seamlessly incorporate hope-focused activities and lessons into their classrooms and work.

Agency and Social Action

- Being a PAR project allowed for collaborative and integrated knowledge mobilization activities uniquely responsive to teacher researchers’ needs.
- While the importance of teacher well-being heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic, this project highlights the importance of teacher well-being both inside and outside of pandemic conditions.

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