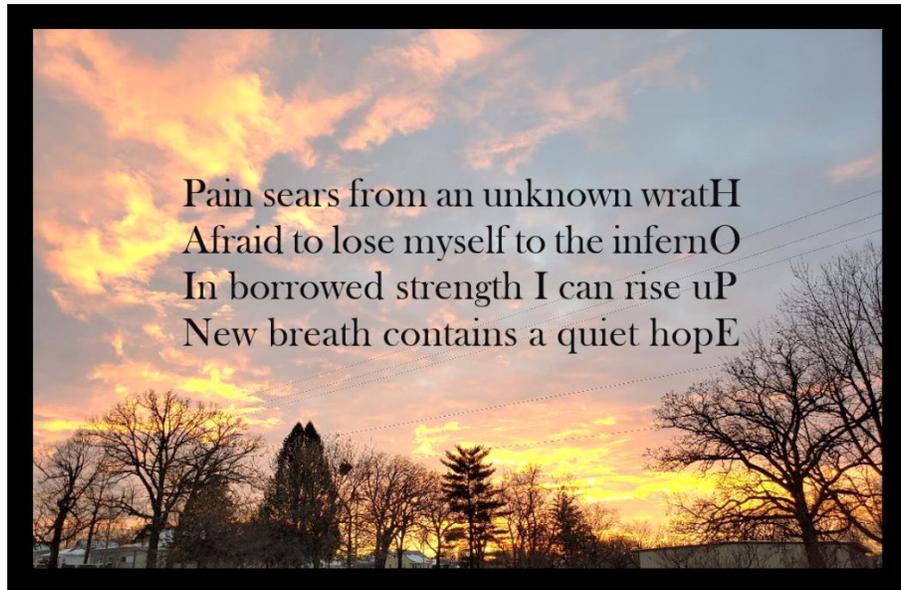


Peer Perspective February 2021



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Hope can be difficult to find at times, especially when our internal environment (like mental health or physical health) or our external environment (like our home, community, or larger society) are causing us stress or pain. There are any number of reasons why we might have some trouble seeing hope right now – we may be feeling isolated or worried about tension in our living situation; we may be feeling the loss of a loved one, or a job, or our routine, or normalcy; we may be feeling fear or anger about things happening nationally, or locally, or personally; we may be sick; we may be feeling an increase in our mental health symptoms; and so many more.

The interesting thing I've learned about hope though is that it doesn't need to be our own, at least at first. A lot of times it's easier to hold hope for others than it is to hold hope for ourselves, so when we don't feel particularly hopeful, sometimes it helps to borrow it from outside of ourselves. We can pull in little pieces of hope from our supporters, like friends, family, members of recovery/support groups, peer specialists, therapists, providers/staff, warmlines, crisis hotlines, or any other people or animals you find supportive. We can pull in hope from movies, videos, quotes, books, poems, games, art, or other media. We can also pull in hope from really *experiencing* our actions, like a quiet walk in the woods, photography, eating something really tasty, drawing or coloring without judgment, or just about anything if we pay attention mindfully.

As we pull in outside hope, we're eventually able to combine all the little borrowed pieces into our own warm, bright glow that gives us strength and can be shared with those around us. We all have the capacity for hope, just as we have the capacity for pain, joy, anger, fear, love. And we all need to borrow hope sometimes, which is why people share theirs so freely. There is hope in asking for help, in healing, in taking that next new breath.

We are the evidence; We hold the hope.