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Hope in the Age of Anxiety

Anthony Scioli
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"Hope is…an essential element of our spiritual lifeblood. And it is the best medicine for overcoming feelings of helplessness, alienation, and fear. Individuals who are hopeful…achieve a different way of being in the world," according to Drs. Scioli and Biller; their book is about understanding hope and using it to thrive by giving oneself both the roots and wings needed to address life's concerns and challenges.

Hope has been given a bad rap of late, yet those who have suggested that one would be better off without it, equating it with passivity and denial of the harsh realities of life, have offered nothing to take its place. Scioli and Biller state that true hope is active rather than passive, and offers "a real alternative to surrender born of pain, suffering, or loss. It does not derive from blind optimism, or thwarted desire, or deluded fantasy." Rather, the authors show that hope is the most basic longing of humanity, which gives us the capacity to envision a better future. "It is hope," say the authors, "that stirs the soul and moves the masses."

Their book is encyclopedic in scope, and may well be the definitive guide to its subject, covering the topic from evolutionary, biological, cultural, and spiritual perspectives. They incorporate the advances of modern science as well as ancient wisdom to place hope in its rightful place as the essence of the human life force. In moving vignettes in which hope sustains people through loss, difficulties, and unimaginable horrors, the authors show that survivors are those who, rather than denying reality, confront and embrace it, with hope empowering them to surmount the odds they face.

In an engaging, conversational style, the authors explore the descriptions of hope offered by psychologists, psychiatrists, philosophers, and theologians in the past century, and share evidence of its meaning to artists, philosophers, and scientists since the time of the ancient Greeks. This book provides tools that address in depth the major challenges faced by humans: fear, loss, illness, and death, in a manner that is at once accessible, incisive, and compassionate; it is an important contribution to the literature and necessary reading for those seeking wisdom on the topic.

Dr. Anthony Scioli is a professor of Clinical Psychology at Keene State College. He completed Harvard Fellowships in Human Motivation and Behavioral Medicine, co-authored the chapter on emotion for the *Encyclopedia of Mental Health* and serves on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Positive Psychology* and the *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*. Dr. Henry Biller is a professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Rhode Island, and a Fellow of the American Psychological Association. He has served on the advisory board of the Men's Health Network and on the editorial board of the *Archives of Sexual Behavior,* and is the author of nine books.
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