

*This piece was submitted in November 2022 during the SIRCC Online conference as part of its Hope Reservoir.*

## **Doing Hope**

I wonder if it would be helpful to think about hope not just as something we feel (or lack), but a think we do. I think we sometimes have to do hope for other people when their hopeless and despair is just too great, or when the risk of disappointment too intolerable. For it not to be a plastic, pollyanna hope, I think we also have to be fully present with the pain of hopelessness – our own and that of the children and young people in our care.

So what do we do, when we do hope with and/or for young people? While it might involve talking explicitly about hope or saying intentionally hopeful things, I wonder if our symbolic communication of hope in quiet but powerful ways has more impact. Repairing property damage swiftly, every time, conveys a steadfast hope not only for a young person's recovery from the pain that fuels such destruction, but for a future in which that young person creates and maintains a beautiful home of her own someday.

And beauty. Beauty is a way of doing hope. Our intrinsic need, as human beings, for beauty may be because our exposure to it connects us to our better selves and a sense of our own boundless potential. Being bowled over by a poem or piece of writing, immersing ourselves in nature, eating beautiful food or being swept up in beautiful music, these experiences are like a shot of B12 right into that sometimes withered part of us that knows there is goodness in this world and in ourselves.

Beauty also is elastic enough to hold sadness and despair alongside hope. Vedran Smailovic's 22 cello performances in the bombed-out square in Sarajevo in protest of the 22 people killed while queuing for bread always comes to my mind when I think about hope and beauty. The piece he played, Albinoni's Adagio in G Minor, conveyed a depth of grief beyond words. Yet his act of civil resistance gave hope to his countrymen and women, and captured the attention of the world. I can't imagine it would have been as powerful if he had played something peppy and upbeat.

Regularly looking for and sharing stories of resistance and overcoming, individual accounts but especially collective, is another way to do hope. Don't we all crave experiences of transcendence, even if just vicariously? It also means cultivating a keen eye for seeing the often-overlooked triumphs of the everyday. They remind us of that magical developmental force there within all of us.

So like care and love, hope, for me, is a feeling and a doing.