

# Sue Thompson's Be**exceptional**

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## Hope Makes Not Ashamed

This past week, I have communicated with three people about jobs lost, gained, or hoped for. I offered the one thing I know is needed above all: hope.

I am not talking about wishing, or impractical, fanciful dreams. I am speaking of hope as positivity, hope as perspective, hope as a confident expectation for the future. I see this as probably the most important target on which a person can focus when mired in a job that's become dull or possibly agonizing, or when we find ourselves out of work, suddenly or with notice.

The oxygen of the job hunt in this day is a prevalent, insidious element of fear and nullifying negativity. I can hardly be any stronger. All around us are reports of the near impossibility of finding a job. Hopelessness is infused with every report: the job market is awful, the older worker is shut out, the field for which one is trained or is passionate is inaccessible, the number of Americans who have dropped out of the workforce is nearly incalculable, and on and on and on with a relentless battering ram of disaster and catastrophe. It's not that these things aren't true; it's that they are only partly true, but they are harped ferociously.

Did you know that hopelessness is a strong predictor of mortality? I read about this in a book called *Making Hope Happen: Create the Future You Want for Yourself and Others* by Shane Lopez, PhD, a senior scientist at the Gallup Organization (thanks, Kelly Clark, for your continuing book recommendations. This one is priceless). Don't be fooled by the title—this isn't some Pollyanna, law-of-attraction foolishness. Publishers have to sell books, so they devise titles that catch the eye. *Making Hope Happen* is filled with solid research on this imperative strength. When we are low on hope we are more prone to illness, we crumple under adversity, we degenerate psychologically, we die earlier. Blatant facts.

Without hope, you will believe the lie that you will never again find work. You will be ensnared by isolation and depression. You will accept, even embrace, the darkness that whispers to you that this is how it is, things will never change, you will never get out of this situation, you might as well give up.

Don't breathe in that awful gas of inescapable doom. You've got to look at it as a force that will work on you until hope is obliterated. Here are 5

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absolute truths you must seize to keep from being pulled under:

1. It's true that *everyone* who wants work isn't finding it, but it's also true people find new and good and better jobs all the time. Don't listen to the stink of discouragement dispensed about how *no one* will hire someone who is currently unemployed or over age 55. These are falsehoods. Conventional wisdom is often deceitful, and it is frequently not wise. Refuse to buy it.
2. Things may be tough for a while, but if you keep yourself expectant and positive, you will see things you never would have observed if you weren't open to possibilities. I'd love to hear a report on how many people got good jobs through temping or contracting. You need to hear about a guy who settled for a job at a warehouse and showed an attitude of gratitude and shared his knowledge with others and found himself being asked to move into an executive position when it became apparent he had much value to offer, because stories like this remind you of *what is possible*.
3. "Trouble don't last always" is an old saying underscoring the reality that circumstances are subject to change. All it takes is meeting one right person, or helping the organization that can use your expertise, or showing your willingness to assist, always maintaining an inner confidence that ends up shining in your demeanor and behavior. *Life can change in a day*. You will find work, you will survive, you will do what it takes. Keep calm and carry on.
4. Know what you're made of. Articulate what makes you unique and good at what you do, and don't just highlight skills. Know your strengths. Find out what your talents are. Be able to explain your character strengths, and use the language of these things in your resume, on interviews, and when you introduce yourself at gatherings. "I'm a detail-oriented people person" means nothing, but "I'm a socially intelligent, enthusiastic professional with an ability to create and maintain great working relationships" *stands out*. Inspire yourself by knowing what you bring to life. Encourage yourself. Know thyself.
5. Keep your current network, and build on it. Consider every new person you meet a serendipitous encounter and make friends, not just job prospects. Gather strength from others. Find your cheerleaders. You're going to have bad days, dark days. Don't camp there. Allow yourself a little wallowing and then get up and go help someone else or seek out positive people.

My current job, which I love, and this continuing endeavor with Exceptionality, is due to an internalized belief that I am more than right now, that I can choose optimism over melancholy. You can, too. Keep hope alive.

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YOUR

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# CHARACTER

Is SHOWING



"Listen to the mustn'ts, child. Listen to the don'ts. Listen to the shouldn'ts, the impossibles, the won'ts. Listen to the never haves—then listen close to me: anything can happen, child. Anything can be."

~ Shel Silverstein

"Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed."

~ Alexander Pope

"Faith goes up the stairs that love has built and looks out the windows which hope has opened."

~ Charles Spurgeon

"'You can't eat hope,' the woman said.

'You can't eat it, but it sustains you,' the colonel replied."

~ Gabriel García Márquez, *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba*

## About Sue

Sue Thompson is a personality expert, etiquette trainer, and an instructor in life lessons. Her work on recognizing and developing talent, identifying personalities and working effectively with the people who possess them, responding appropriately to difficult experiences, treating others with respect, and behaving like a professional have caused companies and business organizations throughout the country to value her presentation skills. She trains those entering the workforce how to present themselves with style and authority; new employees in the importance of respecting one's work and the workplace; managers in the value of understanding employees' talent and temperament; and everyone in the timeless rules of behavior that will always bespeak excellence.

