



# Promoting the Development of High- Risk Children

High Risk Does Not Have to  
Equal Poor Outcomes

# Presentation Goals

- Understand experiences of young children at risk
- Consider benefits of early intervention programs for this population
- Explore cultural perspectives on early intervention for young children at risk

**\*\*\*African American children\*\*\***

The background features a grid of squares in various shades of blue, green, and purple. Several floral images are overlaid: a pink flower in the top right, red berries on a green leaf in the top left, a yellow flower in the bottom center, and a pink thistle-like flower in the bottom right.

# Each Day in America.....

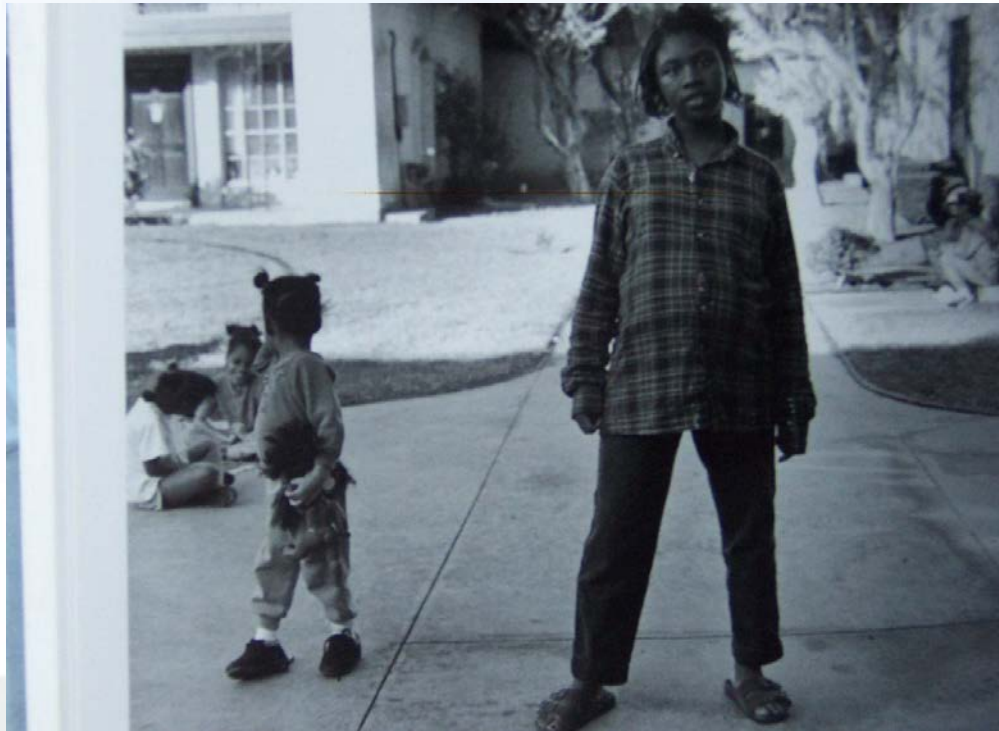
*Children's Defense Fund*

2,573 babies are born into poverty.





**1,204 babies are born to teen mothers.**



2 mothers die from complications of pregnancy or childbirth.



**949 babies are born at low birthweight.**



80 babies die before their first birthdays.

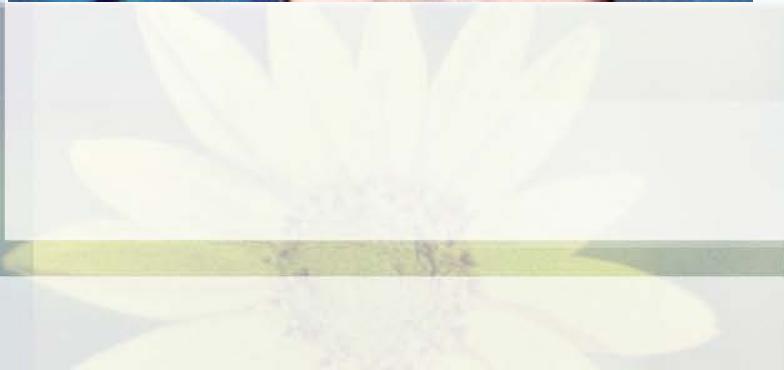




**2,058 children are confirmed as  
abused or neglected.**



**5 children are killed by abuse or neglect.**

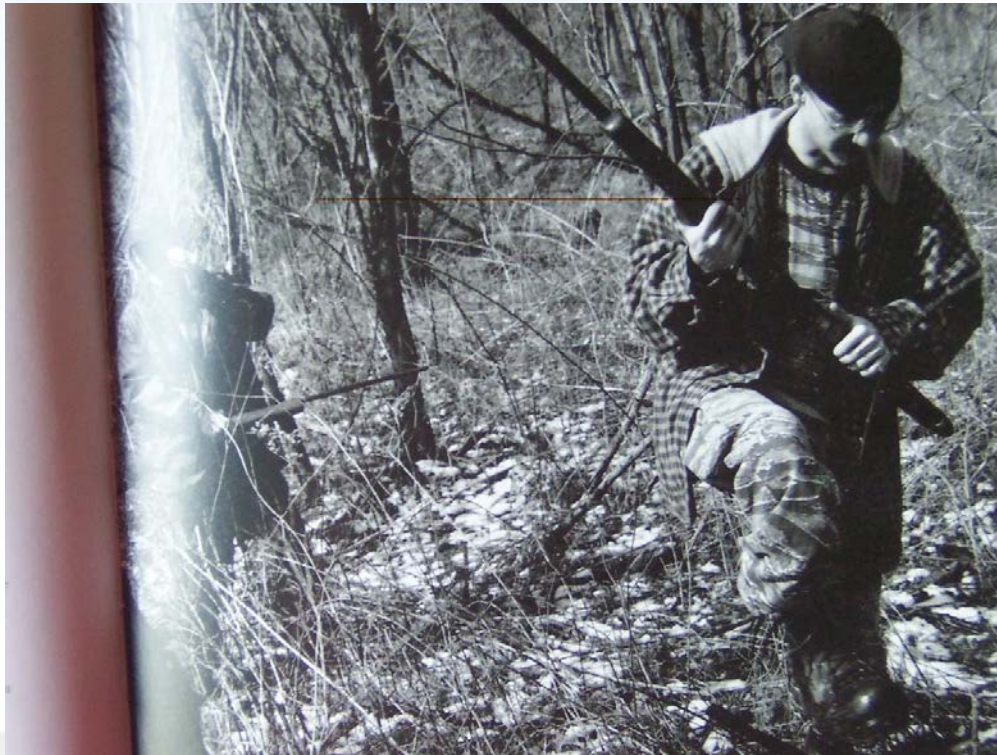


*830 children enter foster care.*





**8 children or teens are killed  
by firearms.**





4,133 children are arrested.



**5 children or teens commit  
suicide.**





Children at highest risk ...

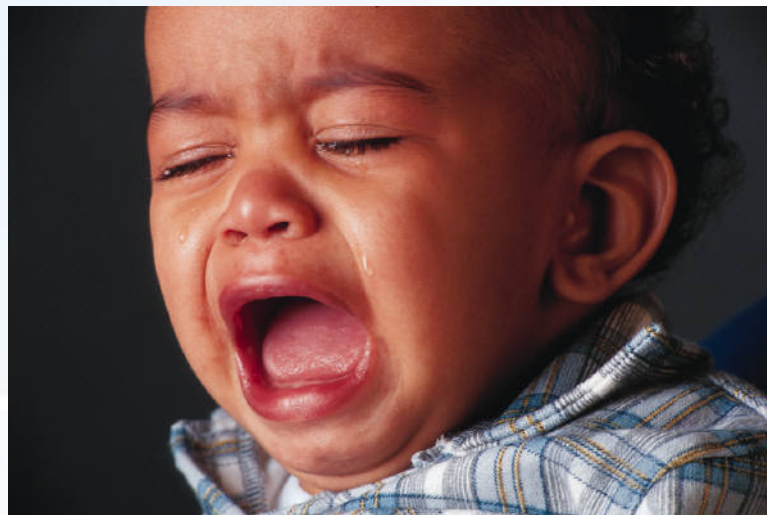
*those who experience “toxic stress”*

*Grow up in poverty.*





Are part of minority groups.



*Have depressed mothers.*



*Experience protracted losses.*





Are exposed to violence and trauma.



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PHOTO BY EMILY WAX FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

In Sudan's Darfur region, a woman who was raped by Janjaweed militiamen shows her scars. Aid workers say such rapes are systematic.

## 'We Want to Make a Light Baby'

### Arab Militiamen in Sudan Said to Use Rape as Weapon of Ethnic Cleansing

By EMILY WAX  
Washington Post Foreign Service

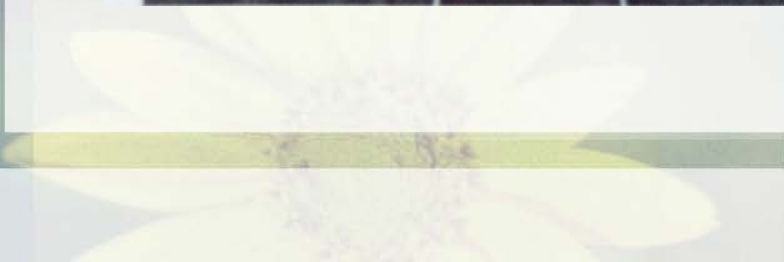
GENEINA, Sudan, June 29—At first light on Sunday, three women walked in-  
man, 22, showing slashes from where a whip had struck her thighs as her father held up a police and health report with details of the attack. "They said, 'You get out of this area

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*Receive compromised parenting.*





How do we improve the  
“developmental niches” of  
young children at  
environmental risk?

***Children at high-risk are  
NOT doomed to have poor  
developmental outcomes.***

# Beacons of Hope<sup>1</sup>: Early Childhood Programs

- **Early childhood programs**
  - Play major role in promoting adaptation in children at high risk
  - May compensate for risky early childhood
  - Can serve as long-term protective factor

<sup>1</sup>Joan Lombardi, Early Head Start Story

# Beacons of Hope: Early Childhood Programs

- **Relationships are key!** (parent, teacher, etc)

**“A relationship is placing one’s heart and soul in the hands of another while taking charge of another in one’s soul and heart.”**

**...Kahlil Gibran**

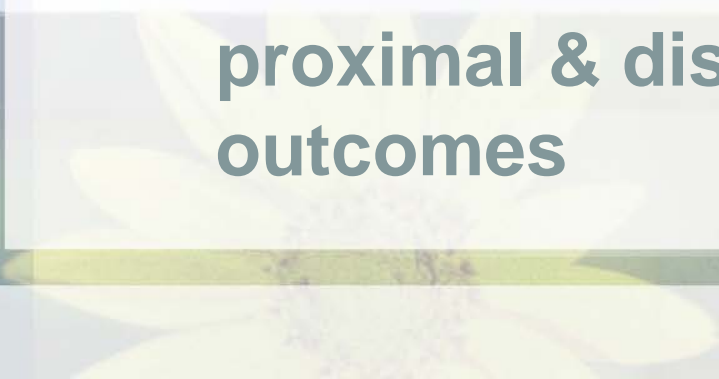




# Beacons of Hope: Early Childhood Programs

- **GOALS**

- To modify risk and protective factors
  - Target specific child/family risks
- To influence short-term child (and proximal & distal ecological) outcomes
- To influence long-term child (and proximal & distal ecological) outcomes

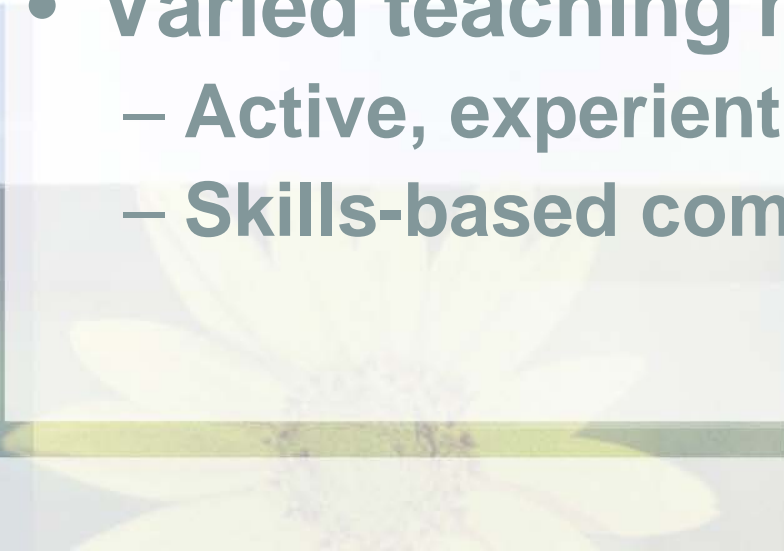


# Beacons of Hope: Early Childhood Programs

- Prior to intervention design and implementation, know population and outcomes of interest
  - Risk and protective characteristics in target population
  - Likely developmental pathways leading to specific outcomes
  - Mechanisms through which intervention can produce positive behavioral change

# Beacons of Hope: Early Childhood Programs

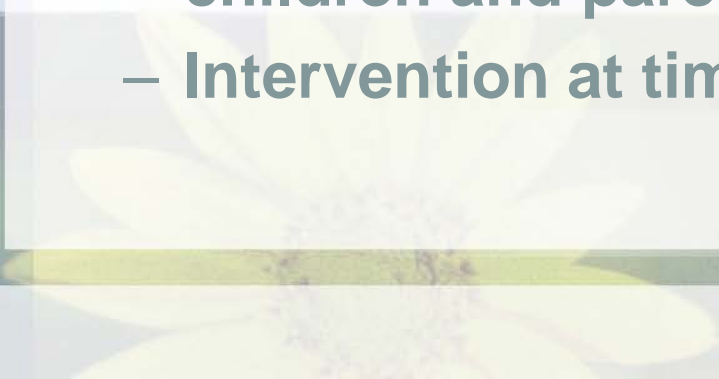
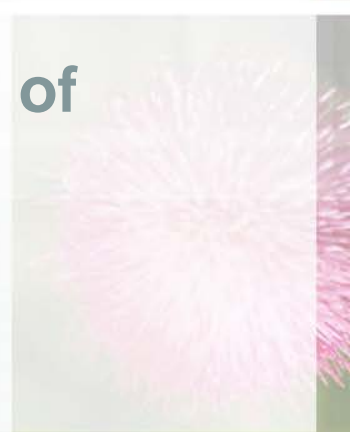
- **Comprehensive (but targeted)**
  - Multiple interventions
  - Multiple settings
  - Two-generational approach
  - “whole child” focus
- **Varied teaching methods**
  - Active, experiential
  - Skills-based component





# Beacons of Hope: Early Childhood Programs

- **Sufficient dosage**
  - Quantity and quality of contact
  - Length, frequency, spacing, duration
- **Appropriately timed**
  - Initiated early to affect development of problem
  - Sensitive to developmental needs of children and parents
  - Intervention at time of crisis



# Beacons of Hope: Early Childhood Programs

- **Staff competence**
  - Reflective Practice
  - Background education/training
  - Expertise based on knowledge of intervention, not clinical experience
  - Mental health of providers
    - Burn-out
  - Knowledge/skill re: risks
    - Substance abuse
    - Mental health
    - Intimate partner violence



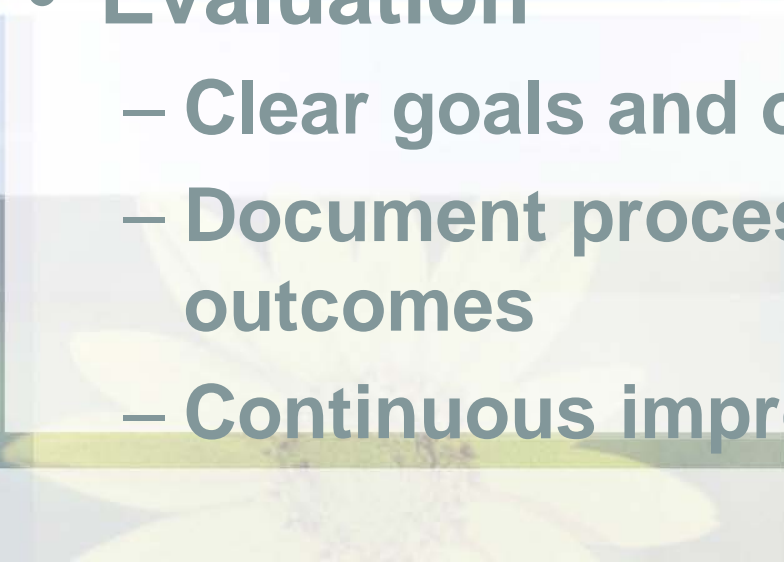
# Beacons of Hope: Early Childhood Programs

- **Socioculturally relevant**
  - Tailored to community & participants
  - Include target group in planning
- **Positive relationships**
  - Promote strong relationships
    - Between parents and children
    - Between staff and families
    - Among staff at all levels



# Beacons of Hope: Early Childhood Programs

- **Evidence-based**
  - Theoretical justification
  - Empirical support
  - Practice based on science, not art
  - Direct research-practice link
- **Evaluation**
  - Clear goals and objectives
  - Document process & goal-specific outcomes
  - Continuous improvement



# Beacons of Hope: Early Childhood Programs

- **High-fidelity**
  - Manualized interventions
  - Adherence to intervention protocol
  - Monitoring of implementation
  - Reflective practice
  - Continuous improvement
  - Observation of provider
    - Mentor teachers in Educare
    - Videotapes of home visitors



# Early Care and Education

- Goal: to promote child development
- Target: development-promoting contexts that affect “whole” child
- Focus: high-quality early intervention can compensate for biological and environmental risks
- Large evidentiary base





# Effective Programs



- **Early Head Start**
  - Broad range of modest outcomes
  - Larger effects early (ages 2 & 3)
  - Larger effects for African American families
  - Mixed models most effective initially
  - Home-based programs more long-term effects
  - Implementation and quality matter!



# Effective Programs



- **Infant Health and Development**
  - Improved health, cognitive, and social-emotional outcomes for low birthweight infants
- **Abecedarian**
  - Improved cognitive outcomes for children of mothers with low IQ's
- **Chicago Parent-Child Centers**
  - Improved school readiness, child, development, and life course outcomes for children in poverty
    - Specific mechanisms – specific outcomes



# Home Visiting Programs



- **Goal: varies with program**
  - Improve child health
  - Promote child development
  - Enhance parenting
- **Service delivery *mechanism***
- **Target varies with goal**
- **Large, “sobering” evidence base**
  - Family support = strong effects on parent & parenting outcomes
  - Child development = fewer effects
    - Related to amount of time devoted to parent-child activities

# Effective Programs



- **Nurse Family Partnership**
  - Better birth & child health outcomes
  - Reductions in child maltreatment
  - Improved life course outcomes
- **Healthy Steps**
  - Child health effects
- **Family Check-up**
  - Reduction in child behavior problems
  - Improved parenting skills
  - Reduced maternal depression





# Effective Programs

- **Healthy Start/Families**
  - Improved child health
  - Enhanced child development
  - Improved parenting
- **Parents as Teachers**
  - Enhanced child development
  - Improved parenting
- **HomVEE, MIECHV, MIHOPE**
  - Federal home visiting initiative
  - List of effective programs that may be used by states

# Parent-Child Interaction Therapies

- **Goal:** to promote child/parent mental health
- **Target:** infant-parent relationships
- **Therapeutic focus:** parental conflicts and practices misattuned to infants' needs
- **Patterns of mental health transmitted across generations**
- **Growing evidentiary base**



# Effective Treatment Programs



- **Infant Parent Psychotherapy**
  - **Depression**
    - Reduced depressive symptomatology
    - Enhanced parent-infant interaction
  - **Attachment Disorders**
    - No effect on attachment security
    - More frequent partnered interaction
    - Greater maternal empathy and communication with infants
  - **Child Abuse and Neglect**
    - Decreased child maltreatment
    - Similar results to home-based, psychoeducational model



# Effective Treatment Programs



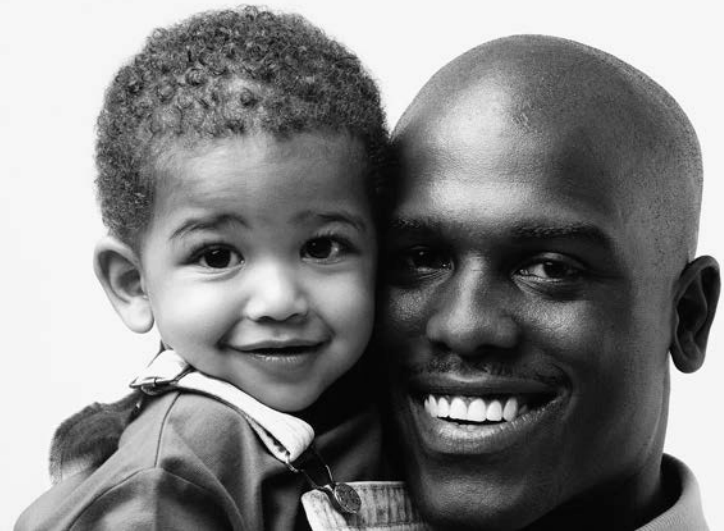
- **Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up**
  - Manualized parent coaching; intensive observation and supervision
  - Child welfare samples
  - Improved parent-child relationship
- **Parent-Child Interaction Therapy**
  - Intensive observation and coaching of parental sensitivity
  - Child welfare and other samples
  - Improved behavior problems; reduced child maltreatment





# Cultural Considerations

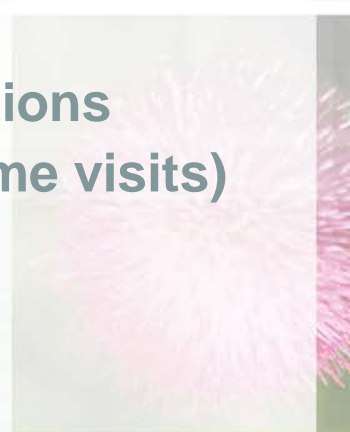
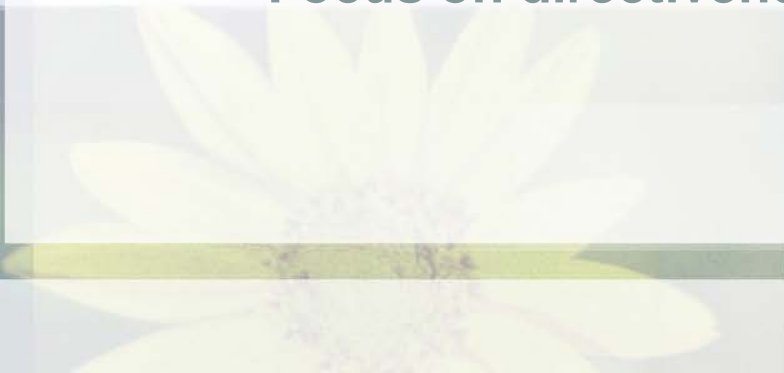
- Extant programs serve diverse families
  - African American families more likely to participate in ECE center-based programs
  - Latino families more likely to participate in home-based programs
  - Lower participation rates among new immigrant families



# Cultural Considerations



- **Importance of context**
  - Poverty and other demographic risks
  - Family structure distinctions
  - Neighborhood factors
- **Enrollment/participation**
  - KNOW population
  - Community-based advisory group
  - Program approach consistent with cultural prescriptions
    - Resistance to mental health interventions
    - Focus on directiveness (ECE and home visits)



# Cultural Considerations

- **Culture-specific meanings of intervention targets**

- **Parenting**

- Autonomy
    - Discipline
    - Warmth/a

- **Child Care/E**

- Didactic v
    - based
    - Teacher-v
    - directed

- **Linkage with outcomes**

- Discipline outcomes
    - Cultural validity of measures



# Cultural Considerations



- **Cultural style of intervention**
  - Validation of social experience of cultural group
    - Immigrant, discrimination
  - Addressing cultural goals
    - Biculturalism
    - Child development & family functioning



# Cultural Considerations



- **Cultural style of intervention**
  - **Incorporation of participants' styles of cultural expression**
    - Religiosity and spirituality
    - Movement
    - Store-telling
    - Fluid boundaries



# Cultural Considerations

- **Using evidence**
  - Effectiveness with cultural group
- **Cultural match/ sensitivity of staff**
  - all staffing levels
  - Professional development
  - Staff reflective capacity
  - Community members as practitioners (aides, interpreters)



**“Never give out while there is hope;  
but hope not beyond reason, for  
that shows more desire than  
judgment.” ...William Penn**

***Early childhood programs  
represent hope with reason!***

**“Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all.”**

**.....Dale Carnegie**





**“To eat bread without hope is still slowly to starve to death.”**

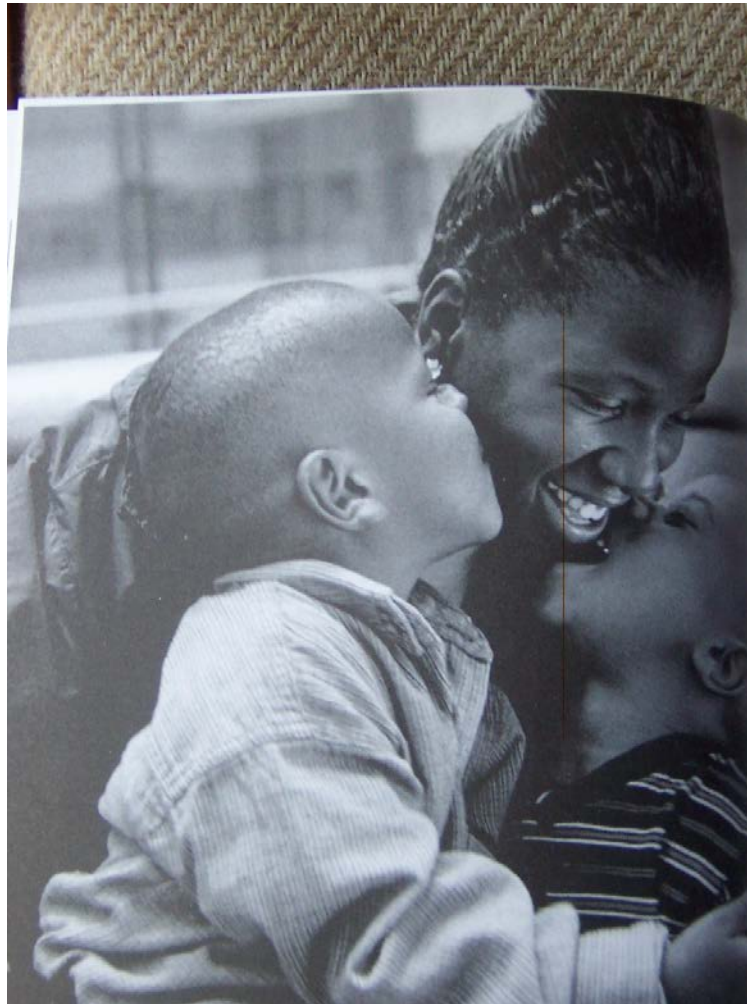
.....Pearl S. Buck



**“Once you choose hope, anything's possible.” .....Christopher Reeve**



**“If it were not for hopes, the heart  
would break.” .....Thomas Fuller**



**“The audacity /of hope/...that joined us as one people.” .....Barack Obama**





**“Just as despair can come to one another only from other human beings, hope, too, can be given to one only by other human beings.”**

.....Elie Weisel



**“Hope is like a road in the country;  
there was never a road, but when  
many people walk on it, the road  
comes into existence.”**

.....Lin Yutang



***Hope is both the earliest and the most indispensable virtue inherent in the state of being alive.***

***If life is to be sustained hope must remain, even where confidence is wounded, trust impaired.***

.....Erik Erikson

Hope springs eternal  
in the human breast;  
Man never is, but always  
To be blest:  
The soul, uneasy and  
confi'n'd from home,  
Rests and expatiates  
in a life to come.

...Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man*, Epistle I, 1733



Hope (English)

Esperanza (Spanish)

Espoir (French)

Amal (Arabic)

Täsfa (Amharic)

Tumaini (Swahili)

Kibou (Japanese)

Unwaivering, Sustaining Hope