

# HOPE IN ACTION LEARNING GUIDE

*ZERO TO THREE Member Exclusive*

Hope is more than a feeling or a wish that circumstances will improve. It is the belief that a meaningful future is possible, paired with the ability to identify pathways toward it and the motivation to keep moving forward.

This self-guided learning experience begins with a special on-demand rebroadcast of *The Science and Power of Hope* with internationally renowned researcher, speaker, and author Dr. Chan Hellman. Drawing on more than 15 years of research, Dr. Hellman explores how hope can strengthen parent-child relationships, buffer the effects of adversity, and support the well-being of children, families, and the professionals who serve them.

After watching the plenary, use this member-exclusive roadmap to continue the journey. You will find four Hope in Action themes, reflection questions, and role-based application prompts that connect the science of hope with the 2026 LEARN Conference program. Whether you are working directly with families, leading a program, shaping policy, preparing other professionals, or conducting research, the guide will help you identify learning that is relevant to your role and turn new insights into purposeful action.

There is no single route through this experience. Move at your own pace, follow the questions that matter most to you, and use the guide in the way that best supports your learning.

# 1. Watch the Plenary

## The Science and Power of Hope

*With Dr. Chan Hellman*

How does hope help children, families, and professionals navigate stress and adversity? In this inspiring plenary, Dr. Chan Hellman introduces hope as a powerful psychological strength and one that can be understood, nurtured, and put into practice.

Drawing on more than 15 years of research, Dr. Hellman examines how hope can:

- Strengthen parent-child relationships
- Buffer the effects of stress and adversity
- Support positive outcomes for children, parents, and families
- Serve as a practical coping resource
- Help protect early childhood professionals from burnout and secondary traumatic stress

**Watch on  
demand  
CLICK HERE**

**Available through  
September 30, 2026  
at 11:59 pm ET**

***Before you watch,*** take a moment to consider:

- What does hope mean to you personally and professionally?
- Where do you currently see hope at work among the children, families, colleagues, or communities you serve?
- What circumstances make hope more difficult to sustain?
- What question would you like this plenary to help you explore?

***As you watch,*** listen for an idea that:

- Affirms something you already understand
- Challenges or complicates your thinking
- Connects with a current need in your work
- Suggests a possible next step

***Capture that idea in a few words. You will return to it in the next section.***



## 2. From Hope to Action

**Hope becomes most powerful when it helps us move toward something that matters.**

The plenary invites us to understand hope not as passive optimism, but as a practical strength: the ability to identify meaningful goals, imagine more than one pathway forward, and sustain the motivation to act even when obstacles arise.

This guide helps you carry that understanding into your professional learning. As you explore the 2026 LEARN Conference program, consider the four connected questions on the following pages. You do not need to explore every question or attend every related session. Begin with the question that feels most relevant to your role, organization, or the children and families you serve. You may also use the four themes together to build a broader learning journey.

# 1. What makes hope possible?

Explore how relationships, belonging, family strengths, and protective factors help children, families, and professionals experience agency and possibility.

## ***Reflection Questions***

- What relationships help children, families, and professionals believe that change is possible?
- How do we recognize and build on existing strengths rather than beginning with deficits?
- Whose definition of a hopeful outcome is guiding the work?
- How can our interactions increase a family's sense of agency?

## ***Make Connections and LEARN More***

Relevant 2026 LEARN Conference sessions include:

- What Comes Into Focus When We Center Relationships? The Safe Babies Lens
- From Insight to Action: Increasing Protective Factors and Embracing Parent Leadership
- Maternal Hope and Subjective Well-being as Promotive Factors for Social Emotional Development in Infants and Toddlers
- Honoring the Whole Child: Deepening Therapeutic Presence through Acceptance and Attunement

Search these session titles and view the latest program details in *the [online schedule](#)*.



## 2. How does hope help us navigate adversity?

Examine approaches to trauma, grief, disruption, and complex circumstances that acknowledge pain while creating pathways toward healing.

### ***Reflection Questions***

- What does hope look like when circumstances cannot be changed immediately?
- How can we acknowledge pain without defining children or families by adversity?
- What pathways or choices can we help families see?
- What systemic barriers make it harder for families to sustain hope?

### ***Make Connections and LEARN More***

Relevant 2026 LEARN Conference sessions include:

- Beyond Tears: Supporting Young Children Through Grief, Family Disruption, and Non-Death Losses
- The Inner Child as Our Muse: Strengthening Trauma-Informed Practice in ECE/ECSE
- Relational Healing in Complex Systems: Fidelity as a Guide for Child-Parent Psychotherapy in Child Welfare
- State Policy/System Strategies for Addressing Prenatal to Three Homelessness and Housing Instability
- Advancing Child-Parent Psychotherapy Through Fidelity, Equity, and Trauma-Informed Care: Using the Child Welfare Fidelity Tool to Strengthen Reflective Practice

Search these session titles and view the latest program details in *the [online schedule](#)*.



### 3. How do we sustain hope in the workforce?

Consider how reflective practice, supportive leadership, and organizational conditions can address burnout, moral injury, and secondary traumatic stress.

#### ***Reflection Questions***

- What is draining hope in my work—and what restores it?
- Am I experiencing ordinary stress, burnout, secondary trauma, or a conflict between my values and working conditions?
- Where are workforce problems being treated as personal failures?
- What organizational condition would make it easier to ask for or receive help?
- How can leaders create credible pathways toward change?

#### ***Make Connections and LEARN More***

Relevant 2026 LEARN Conference sessions include:

- Healing the Healers: Rethinking Self-Care and Addressing Burnout
- Tired, Triggered, and Still Trying? Addressing Moral Injury by Aligning Your Services With Your Values One Interaction at a Time
- Leading with Abundance: Reframing Early Childhood Work from Scarcity to Sustainable Strength
- Calm Leadership in Anxious Systems: Reflective Practice for Executive Leaders
- The Cost of Showing Up Happy: Burnout and the Wisdom of Asking for Help

Search these session titles and view the latest program details in *the [online schedule](#)*.



## 4. How does hope become collective action?

Investigate how family voice, community wisdom, equity, policy, and systems change can transform individual hope into shared progress.

### ***Reflection Questions***

- Who gets to define the desired future?
- Whose lived experience is informing our plans?
- What pathways toward change are actually available?
- Where are people being asked to remain hopeful without receiving meaningful power or resources?
- What is one collective action that could make progress visible?

### ***Make Connections and LEARN More***

Relevant 2026 LEARN Conference sessions include:

- Honoring Voices to Drive Change: Turning Lived Experience into Action
- The IECMH Diversity Collective: Transforming Awareness Into Action and National Movement-Building
- The Sankofa IMH History Project
- Shaping AI Before It Shapes Them: Policy for the First Three Years
- Reimagining Leadership in Early Childhood Systems

Search these session titles and view the latest program details in *the [online schedule](#)*.

## *Carry one idea forward*

Return to the idea you captured while watching the plenary.

- **Notice:** What stayed with you?
- **Connect:** Where does it show up in your work?
- **Question:** What do you want to understand more deeply?
- **Act:** What is one step you could take?
- **Continue:** Which LEARN 2026 session could help you move forward?

Hope does not ask us to overlook obstacles. It helps us identify meaningful goals, develop credible pathways, draw strength from relationships, and continue working toward change.

### 3. Hope in Your Role

The four Hope in Action themes offer one way to explore the LEARN Conference program. Your professional role offers another. Use the prompts below to consider how hope can inform the particular responsibilities, relationships, and decisions you carry in your work.

*You may identify with more than one role. Choose the question that feels most relevant to what you want to explore or strengthen now.*

| Role                                                   | Application question                                                                                                | Suggested outcome                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Direct service and family support professionals</b> | How can my interactions help children and caregivers experience greater agency, connection, and possibility?        | Identify one relationship-based practice to use with children or families.                                |
| <b>Program leaders and supervisors</b>                 | What workplace conditions help staff sustain hope, respond to challenges, and ask for support?                      | Select one team or organizational condition to strengthen.                                                |
| <b>Adult educators and coaches</b>                     | How can professional learning help participants identify realistic possibilities and practice new pathways forward? | Add one hope-centered reflection or application activity to a learning, coaching, or supervision setting. |
| <b>Policymakers and advocates</b>                      | Which policies expand families' choices, resources, influence, and ability to shape their futures?                  | Identify one systems barrier and one actionable policy or advocacy lever.                                 |
| <b>Researchers and evaluators</b>                      | Are we measuring only problems, or also strengths, agency, relationships, and pathways?                             | Identify one way to make research or evaluation more responsive and useful to communities.                |
| <b>Students and emerging professionals</b>             | What gives me a sense of purpose and possibility in this field?                                                     | Define one professional value and identify one relationship or resource that can support it.              |

## 4. My Hope in Action Plan

Bring together what you noticed in the plenary, the Hope in Action theme you explored, and the question connected to your professional role. Use this plan to identify one meaningful goal and begin outlining possible pathways toward it.

*You do not need to have every step figured out. Start with what you know now, identify who should be involved, and choose one realistic action that can help you move forward.*

**1. A goal that matters to me:**

**2. Why it matters for children, families, or professionals:**

**3. Possible pathways or ways forward:**

**4. An obstacle I need to anticipate:**

**5. People whose support, experience, or participation is needed:**

**6. One step I can take in the next seven days:**

**7. A 2026 LEARN session that could help me go further:**

**8. How I will recognize progress:**

