The 7 Factors that Raise Your Hope Quotient
by Pastor Ray Johnston

*The Hope Quotient* is intended to start a ripple effect in you. Small things can make a dramatic difference in your life. Becoming a person with hope – defeating discouragement and building a new future – is always a result of raising seven hope factors, which I call The Seven:

1. **Recharge your batteries. Nobody does well running on empty.**
   Staying encouraged requires developing five supply lives that will keep you spiritually and emotionally fueled.
   a. Invest in your own growth.
   b. Understand the power of worship.
   c. Unleash the Bible in your life.
   d. Build great relationships.
   e. Pay attention to whose voice you are listening to.

2. **Raise your expectations. You don't get what you deserve; you get what you expect.**
   You will never create a new telephone, invent new glass, raise the hopes of a church, build a facility for three hundred children in one of the worst slums in Africa. You will never lift the hopes of a city, a family, a career, or another person until your expectations are raised. Your hope level only rises when your expectations are elevated.

3. **Refocus on the future. It's time to throw away your rearview mirror. No one goes forward well when they are looking back.**
   Fresh vision leads to encouragement. Encouragement leads to hope. Hope leads to change. Change leads to better days ahead.
   a. Passion replaces apathy and discouragement.
   b. You experience great comebacks.
   c. Grace frees you; future vision fuels you.
   d. You are set free to dream.
   e. Forward momentum stabilizes and energizes.

4. **Play to your strengths. Be yourself; everyone else is taken.**
   The greatest thing about discovering and developing your gifts is that it frees you to be yourself. When you find and use your gifts, you will be encouraged to trust God for what’s next. What would be more encouraging? You can stop trying to be everybody else.

5. **Refuse to go it alone. Never underestimate the power of support. Even the Lone Ranger had Tonto.**
   Our friends and colleagues are not created equal. Different kinds of relationships help us in various ways.
   a. Vision Casters
   b. Soul Sharpeners
   c. Models and Mentors
   d. Heart Healers
6. **Replace burnout with balance. Burning the candle at both ends isn’t as bright as you think.**

When we are overloaded and overcommitted, we lose. We lose joy, we lose confidence, we lose peace, we lose friendships, we endure life instead of enjoy life, we are grouchy, irritable, and discouraged. We sacrifice family closeness, we end up less productive, and worst of all, we end up out of touch with God and everybody else in our lives. In other words, we lose hope.

7. **Play great defense. Avoid these five toxic hope killers that can threaten your future:**

   1. Bitterness and resentment
   2. Worry and anxiety
   3. Looking back and comparing
   4. Guilt
   5. Past failures

What practical steps can you take to improve your defense?

   a. Never make decisions when you’re down.
   b. Respond to bad news in great ways.
   c. Shake it off and step up.

Building The Seven into your life will increase your hope level dramatically. Raising these seven will free you and fuel you to catch a fresh vision for your future. And when that happens, *anything is possible.*