

The logo for Talking Hope, featuring the words "TALKING" and "HOPE" in a bold, sans-serif font. The letter "O" in "HOPE" is replaced by a speech bubble icon with three dots inside. The logo is positioned in the top right corner, partially enclosed by a white speech bubble shape.

**TALKING
HOPE**

HOPE.

A manifesto for
new beginnings.



IMAGINE TOMORROW. THEN CHANGE TODAY.

talking-hope.org

HOPE.

A manifesto for new beginnings.

A spectre is haunting our times—the spectre of hopelessness. We must not give it power over us.

By **Eva-Maria McCormack**

TEN THESES ON HOPE:

Thesis 1

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WHY?

When fear tugs at our sleeves, it is hard to let our minds soar. Fear chains us. Hopelessness silences us. Loneliness crushes the power of collective strength and uplifting togetherness.

We live in a time of transformation. Democracy is under threat. Inequality is rampant. Artificial intelligence is outpacing our human capabilities. The climate crisis threatens the very foundations of our life. We need fresh thinking and bold solutions.

At the same time, we enjoy unprecedented progress in wealth, education, health, technology, and security in the Global North.

Yet, fear today seems to define our relationship with the world. We doubt ourselves, our future, our democracy. “It’s all for nothing”, “Nothing I do will matter” – these voices echo in every corner, and they stifle the dialogue we need to agree on new paths towards greater justice and sustainability.

This is a call to hope. For hope is political: It is the bridge to new beginnings, the courage for change, and freedom. Hope does not deny that our future is uncertain – yet it embraces our power to shape our lives and our community with one another. Ten Theses:

Thesis 1

HOPELESSNESS SERVES POWER.

To speak of hope is to first clear away obstacles. First among them is the accusation of naivety, uttered with either pity or sarcasm, almost always with patriarchal condescension.

But hope is no rosy optimism. Nor does it flee from the pressing realities of our time. It does not mean ignoring our apparent inability to unite as humans and confront today's challenges together.

Hope, first and foremost, affirms: *We are alive.* Our story is not finished. By contrast, cynicism toward hope enforces stagnation. It is apathy and laziness in the face of injustice and suffering.

The accusation of naivety also stifles dissent. It silences the call for change and suppresses alternative visions that could reshape our future. Instead of forging new paths forward, hopelessness locks us in place. It cements the status quo and legitimizes entrenched power. The exhausted society repeats itself.

It is no coincidence that autocrats are the greatest peddlers of fear. Fear makes people obedient and easy to control. Hopelessness is just another name for powerlessness — and powerlessness feeds power. It strengthens the hold of those who have no interest in renewal, change and shared well-being.

Thesis 2

UNCERTAINTY ENABLES CHANGE.

We are alive. But we live in uncertainty. We do not know the course of our own story. This makes us fearful.

Yet, if we break through our fear — as individuals, as societies, as humanity — we gain the freedom to co-write our own story, a story whose path is open and not predetermined. More than that: As humans, we have the capacity to find meaning, community and joy in shaping our lives and our community with one another.

Hope is faith in this possibility, which is as natural to us as the fear of an uncertain future.

Hope is the courage to step into uncertainty and act. Where cynicism builds barriers, hope unfolds landscapes of possibilities and invites imagination. It allows for change and carves out new and different paths. In the words of the American writer Rebecca Solnit: „Hope locates itself in the premises that we don't know what will happen and that in the spaciousness of uncertainty is room to act.”

Thesis 3

UNCERTAINTY INVITES DIALOGUE AND DEMOCRACY.

Since we are neither gods nor robots, we act only in uncertain hope. This is terrifying, but it also offers liberation and relief.

If no one person can provide answers with certainty, no one is solely burdened to deliver them. This is an invitation to collaborate—and a mighty argument for dialogue, diversity, and democracy. For, anyone who claims to solely bring salvation is lying. Anyone who insists that only their way is the “right” way is deceiving. Every absolute claim, every extremist stance, every dogma and every “philosopher’s stone” is a hollow — and a lazy — promise.

Hope arises in the plural: The path forward only emerges from compromise and complementarity, from our willingness to see the unifying whole and seek the common good.

This principle holds true on small scales and large. It is especially true when it concerns the Earth, our common home.

Thesis 4

WE HAVE EVERY REASON TO HOPE.

There is no magic stone to solve our challenges, but hope lies all around us, embedded in the bedrock of our past. History is rich with stories of change that can encourage us: the abolition of slavery and the break from absolutist rule, the emancipation of the individual and the rise of civil rights, religious freedom, women's suffrage and more equal rights for women, workers' rights and unions to protect them, rights for children and rights for people of diverse sexual identities and orientations.

History also reminds us that humans are by no means „wolves among wolves.“

When tragedy strikes – whether personal hardship or collective disaster –, our first instinct almost always is to help. It is realistic to assume that most people are driven by good will, that engagement matters, and that generosity can prevail.

Cynicism and distrust, however, are impulses deliberately fuelled especially in politics and the media. They serve those who cement their power by sowing distrust and keeping us divided.

But citizens who believe in a better future strive for more than the status quo. They seek change. Hope is a political force – because it drives us to act.

Thesis 5

HOPE FOR TOMORROW CHANGES TODAY.

The sweep of history shows that all major social achievements shared a common root: They began with individual dreams and then grew into collective visions of a better life, propelled forward by the tremendous pull of hope.

Despite uncertain outcomes, the longing for a better future has led people to forsake the familiar and pursue the unknown. It has enabled them to endure conflicts and overcome adversity. And between the loss of the old and the creation of the new, it has empowered them to navigate oceans of additional uncertainty.

Hope for a better tomorrow is not naive, even when that future seems entirely out of reach. On the contrary: Dreams drive transformation. They ignite the energy and creativity that are needed for true change. They free us from the grip of present conditions and open boundless spaces to imagine and reshape the future.

The power of hope lies in the fact that it confronts us, again and again, with the essential question that drives every great transformation: *“How do we truly want to live?”* It is our longing for a better tomorrow that makes us change today.

Thesis 6

THE FUTURE IS FOR PEOPLE.

We must unlearn and relearn to write new stories of the future. Driven by self-imposed notions of efficiency, we have confined creativity to technological innovation, industrial productivity, and economic growth. In doing so, we have sidelined our social well-being, human connection and the common good.

Bound by this narrow mindset, today's vision of the future is little more than the technological refinement of the status quo. It deceives us into believing that the best possible order has already been achieved. Instead of urging us to reevaluate what

we value in our shared existence, it erases humanity from the equation. Where there should be life, we let numbers rule.

We have forgotten that our society and economy are not laws of nature. They are products of history, and they can be changed. We have both the right and the undeniable hope to improve them – for the benefit of all.

Thesis 7

HOPE IS THE COURAGE TO EMBRACE UNCERTAINTY.

We need new stories of the future to confront the crises of our time —stories that reconnect us with the fundamental question of our existence: „*How do we truly want to live?*“ Stories that call us toward a sustainable, peaceful and just future on our common home, the Earth. Stories that ignite our longing for this future – and fuel our passion to fight for it.

Such stories break free from the obsessive rationalizations of our age and, instead, place people and community at their centre. They are bold, transformative visions

that aim for the best possible scenario – and in doing so, they envision the sustainable well-being of all.

Great stories of the future create meaning and make sense before they ask about feasibility. They imagine what may seem impossible, yet they unleash every force to make it real. They are both monumental and humble, knowing their outcome is uncertain. As Václav Havel said, “Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.”

We should have the courage to embrace such stories of the future. Dreams do not come true because they are predestined, but because they carry the power of hope – hope which can make the impossible possible.

Thesis 8

HOPE ALLOWS FOR FEAR.

The genuine progress we have made in wealth, health, education and technology since the industrial age has lulled us into believing that life and nature are under our control. But this illusion has bred new nightmares: For those who feel entitled to security, today's crises are even more unsettling.

We are not the engineers of a future that will simply follow our blueprints, but that does not mean we cannot shape it. Boldness and humility toward the future belong together—just like hope and fear.

Let's cast aside the arrogance that we can possess the future! Let us focus on the mea-

ning we create through action. Let's embrace the transformative power of positive dreams.

Hope is not the absence of fear. It is living alongside fear and uncertainty while still committing to a better future. Hope is not fearless, yet it chooses the courage to act into the unknown.

Thesis 9

THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL.

„What could I possibly do?“ Let us reject this question! It is the greatest ally of those who ignore, block and delay solutions to the crises of our time.

Change begins with the smallest actions — with words, with encounters, with conversations. “I have a dream,” said Martin Luther King, and he spoke with others. A few became more. And more. And more.

History shows this pattern time and again—until what once seemed impossible becomes the norm, and opposition to it feels outdated. And suddenly, we wonder why we ever thought or acted differently.

Social contagion works. Systemic change may feel as slow as a snail from within, but historically, it often unfolds with incredible speed.

Let us have hope and let us have courage: With every conversation, we set off a chain reaction that keeps spreading, even when its results are not immediate. We amplify change and push it forward in often surprising and unexpected ways.

The personal is political: One person who does not remain silent, who rejects cynicism, who encourages, who comforts, who dreams—that one person can change the world.

Thesis 10

HOPE IS ACTING INTO THE UNKNOWN.

Let us not give power to hopelessness.

We have reason to hope.

Because hope for tomorrow changes today.

Let us dream stories of the future — Bold stories of a good life for all.

Let us have courage for the future — and be humble before it.

Let us not give power to hopelessness.

If we dare to dream,

Dare to hope,

We act!

Talking Hope gUG

Talking Hope gUG is a registered charitable organization dedicated to fostering positive societal change. Our vision is a fair and sustainable future in which all people can thrive and live together peacefully.

To this end, we promote sustainable living conditions and climate action, social justice, health, and the active democratic participation of all societal groups.

We support collective transformation through socially inclusive communication, solution-oriented campaigns, participatory project work, and inspiring visions of a positive future.

Talking Hope gUG

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