

UNITED WISDOM

Hope without a guarantee: what can support us in uncertainty

Meaning and Direction

Andrey Zarinsh & Maria Evilkut

P37 · EN

@andrey.zarinsh @ilkutki

Hope without a guarantee: what can support us in uncertainty

Epigraph

> *Some things are in our control and others not.*

Epictetus, Enchiridion 1, opening sentence. Displayed English labelled Elizabeth Carter; modernization date not established.

What this article is about

Hope often sounds like a promise: things will work out, someone will reply, difficulty will end as we wish. Yet that future is not a fact. A strong promise can create a false choice: assure ourselves of success or abandon the wish. Another position is possible. We can hope for an outcome, acknowledge limited information about its likelihood, and notice help actually available now. This article explores the distinction through invented everyday examples. Selected Aristotle, Epictetus and Romans passages retain their different grounds. Religious hope is not reduced to calculating chances; philosophical advice does not demand that feelings stop. The questions describe a position, offering neither treatment nor a tested technique for obtaining results. Readers remain free to choose their grounds, revise a plan and decline to perform confidence they do not feel.

I. A wish is not yet a forecast

Imagine an invented situation. Marina is preparing a small exhibition of her drawings and sends an application to a local venue. She wants it to be accepted, wants people to see the work, and wants this first showing to begin a continuing conversation. These wishes are understandable, but none tells us what the organisers have decided. A statement of hope describes her relationship to a possible future; confirmation of acceptance would describe something else. When that distinction disappears, every silent day can be treated as evidence of a personal mistake. Only one fact is currently known, however: there is no reply. The meaning of the silence still needs clarification, and a person's worth is not measured by the fate of one application.

It helps to distinguish three statements even when they sit together in ordinary speech. The first expresses a preference: this outcome matters to me. The second assesses a possibility: the information available gives me a certain degree of confidence in expecting it. The third states an intention: before the answer arrives, I am willing to do specified work. The first does

not establish the second, and the third may remain reasonable without a confident forecast. Marina can finish the drawing captions without knowing the decision. But if the work requires abandoning other commitments, desire alone cannot settle the cost. Hope neither exempts her from considering that cost nor requires her to pay with every effort that imagination can suggest.

This distinction need not make our language cold. It lets us tell someone close to us how much the result matters without asking them to confirm something unknown. Marina can explain that she feels anxious and is waiting eagerly; her listener can understand without becoming a witness to future success. Sometimes it is enough to acknowledge the wish and ask whether help with an already identifiable task would be welcome. The conversation can then hold two truths together: the future matters, and information about it is limited. No compulsory calm follows from this way of speaking. Fear, excitement or irritation may remain; more accurate words neither prescribe the correct feeling nor guarantee a pleasant period of waiting.

II. An unknown likelihood does not require an invented number

Discussing the likelihood of a particular decision requires information relevant to that decision. What rules were announced? Do the works fit the format? What do we actually know about the number of applications and places, and what are we merely assuming? Without such data, a confident number would decorate a sentence rather than report a calculation. An honest stopping point matters here: the chance cannot yet be assessed on adequate grounds. That does not mean the chance is small, nor does it secretly guarantee that it is large. Missing data describes the state of our knowledge. The wish for an exhibition belongs to another aspect of the situation and may remain strong. Limited information does not require Marina to devalue her drawings or pretend that the answer is unimportant.

An everyday impression also deserves its own name. A friendly note from an organiser may suggest that communication remains open; it is not an acceptance unless it says so. An earlier success shows that a particular event once occurred, but the circumstances of the current selection may differ. Marina can consider both points while retaining the distinction between a sign and a conclusion. This does not require an endless investigation. Clarification is appropriate where an answer could change a real action: whether to deliver the works, pay for printing or invite guests. Information is useful through its relationship to a decision, rather than through the number of hours spent searching each message for a hidden meaning.

The assessment may remain verbal and bounded: the possibility is still open, the answer is unknown, and a later decision was promised. Such a note need not contain a percentage. It must match the actual communications, or uncertainty will once again be disguised. The reverse boundary also matters: after an explicit refusal, the old statement that the answer remains open is no longer accurate. Hoping for an exhibition elsewhere is possible, but this

application has now received an outcome. Separating knowledge from desire helps us notice that change. It does not forbid disappointment, demand an immediate substitute, or turn acknowledgement of one fact into abandonment of an entire creative future.

III. Confidence and available means

In Rhetoric II.5, Aristotle discusses fear and confidence in the context of persuasive speech. He observes that perceived means and allies may contribute to confidence. This is a historical account of perception, not modern research establishing which plans succeed. For our example, it opens an editorial question: what does Marina actually have available? Finished drawings, a way to contact the venue, and a friend's agreement to help hang the work are different resources. None supplies the organisers' decision. Nevertheless, confirmed help with a particular task differs from the encouraging assumption that someone will inevitably appear and arrange everything. Making that distinction does not require dismissing anyone's kind words as useless.

A real support can be modest in size and clear in its limits. A friend can help one evening but cannot negotiate on Marina's behalf. The venue answers questions about the format without promising a place. Marina herself can prepare images but has no time for every additional task. Once named, these boundaries turn a plan into a description of mutually understood actions. If they disappear, hope quietly transforms another person into an unlimited resource. What seemed like support can then become a demand that nobody agreed to meet. Taking care of one's hope includes respecting other people's time: agreement to one task is not agreement to solve the whole problem or take responsibility for the final outcome.

Resources are accompanied by conditions on which an action depends. A caption needs a confirmed artwork size; inviting guests requires a known date. Recording that dependency may be more useful than discussing general optimism again. If the date is unknown, invitations can wait while preparation of the drawings continues. This is not surrender. It is simply choosing an action on the grounds currently available. Such a choice cannot prove that waiting will cease to feel unsettling. Its more limited value lies in a clear agreement: everyone knows what is being done, what has been postponed, and which message would permit the next step. That clarity can matter even if the application is ultimately refused.

IV. Acting without a promise of victory

In Enchiridion 29, Epictetus advises considering the conditions and consequences of an undertaking. His example of a contest includes possible defeat after preparation. Reading the passage lets us distinguish chosen effort from secured victory. The philosophical text also contains stringent historical demands about a way of life; today's reader need not adopt them wholesale. The editorial question here is narrower: which bounded action would Marina consider worthwhile if the exhibition never happens? A prepared list of drawings may help her understand her own work. An expensive order useful only after acceptance requires different grounds. The distinction depends on the task, rather than on a general command always to continue or always to protect oneself against possible disappointment.

It helps to describe an action together with its limit; otherwise a small step can open an endless chain. Checking a list one evening is one decision; remaking everything until all doubt disappears is another, with no clear ending. In our example, Marina chooses to finish captions for the selected works and then pause until the answer arrives. This is an invented option, not a routine prescribed to everyone. Someone else may reasonably defer preparation or clarify the conditions first. What matters is asking what counts as completing the chosen task. Once that answer is clear, hope need not endlessly prove its sincerity through additional work. The work can be acknowledged as finished while the future remains unknown and the wish remains very strong.

Pausing does not cancel responsibilities under agreements already made. If Marina promised to send images on a particular day, the organisers' silence does not itself release her from that promise. She can fulfil it, explain changed circumstances or propose another date. Dependence on someone else's decision differs here from her own participation in shared work. She cannot control the whole situation, but she can clarify commitments within reach. Even this does not make willpower omnipotent: circumstances can constrain a chosen action. That boundary is especially important when reading Epictetus' first section. His moral distinction does not establish human invulnerability or permit us to attribute every difficulty to an insufficiently correct inner choice.

V. Religious hope retains its own ground

In Romans 8:18–27, hope concerns redemption within a Christian perspective. Waiting appears alongside suffering, groaning and the help of the Spirit. Turning that passage into a promise that an application will be accepted would substitute a different object for its hope. Yet describing it as an ordinary calculation of unknown chances would also be inaccurate: trust in God belongs essentially to its religious ground. Our comparison preserves both boundaries. A Christian reader may connect hope with faith; a secular reader need not adopt those premises. The absence of a guarantee about one worldly event does not refute religious hope. The article considers the limits of our promises concerning a particular result; it does not decide the ultimate meaning of human life.

Different grounds also require different questions. When Marina asks for the reply date, she needs information from the venue. When she reflects on why continuing to draw matters, her answer may draw on values, relationships and convictions. One conversation does not replace the other. Prayer, if it belongs in her life, does not become a notice from the organisers; the organisers' notice does not exhaust a person's relationship to the future. Faith can thus remain possible without being used as an administrative certificate. The same attention to boundaries matters between people: one's own trust does not authorise assigning a religious interpretation to someone else's waiting. Help can be offered in language the other person is free to accept or decline.

Hope need not be required to look cheerful. In the selected Romans passage, waiting does not exclude groaning; that is a feature of this particular text, not a universal theory of emotional experience. In ordinary conversation, the article proposes a related caution: do not infer the presence of hope from a facial expression. Marina may still value her project while feeling tired of waiting. Someone beside her may speak quietly about the future without an inspiring narrative. If a person does not wish to explain their grounds, respect need not depend on their disclosure. Hope need not become a public testimony of optimism. Its expression belongs to the person, and agreed help should not be granted only after a test of sufficient gratitude or confidence.

VI. Promising participation is more precise than promising someone else's outcome

Return to the invented Marina. A friend may say that he is certain her application will be accepted. If he has no role in the decision and no new information, this confidence primarily communicates his attitude. It can be received as goodwill without being entered as a ground for a forecast. A more definite offer would sound different: he is willing to check the captions or help deliver the work once a date is confirmed. This names help that the other person actually offers. The language need not be dry; warmth and a shared wish still have a place. The future result simply is not used as a promise by someone who cannot secure it through his own action and has no authority to speak for the organisers.

Even a promise of participation needs boundaries. If the friend can give an hour, naming that limit is better than leaving an image of the whole problem being solved. If his participation depends on his work schedule, that condition belongs in the agreement too. Marina can say that this help would be useful or decline if she needs something different now. Both responses are legitimate. A mismatch between offered and wanted help does not establish a failure of friendship. What matters is avoiding the silent growth of expectations on another person's behalf. Scope can be clarified without accusation: which action is being discussed, when is it possible, what must happen first, and how will changed circumstances be communicated? This concerns participation, not a contract guaranteeing feelings forever.

Some help has presence itself as its immediate purpose. Talking about the drawings one evening, or taking a walk together after a refusal, is possible without promising to change the venue's decision. Even presence should not be assigned automatically: the person may want conversation, quiet company or time alone. Asking about that preference is more precise than deriving it from one's idea of how waiting ought to look. Hope acquires a shared aspect without handing another person responsibility for the entire future. We can accompany someone who does not yet know what to do next. We need not first persuade them that everything will end well. We can honestly name the participation available and leave them free to decide whether it fits their present needs.

VII. New information changes a plan, not a person's worth

Suppose the organisers tell Marina that the exhibition places have already been allocated. Previously she was waiting for an answer; now the answer is known. Continuing the earlier preparations as though the message had never arrived would lose the distinction between hope and fact. Refusal can be acknowledged without a conclusion of personal inadequacy. This venue made a particular choice, but one choice does not establish a final verdict on her creative work. Nor must she immediately prove the opposite by submitting another application. She can pause and consider which actions already begun still make sense. Unsent invitations can remain unsent; if the friend's assistance is no longer needed in its previous form, that change deserves a direct message.

Not every change arrives as a final answer. The venue may postpone the date or alter the format. It then helps to clarify what changed: the date, requirements, availability or possibility of showing the work at all. A general phrase about bad news can hide distinctions that matter to the decision. Marina may remain interested in an exhibition while declining the new format because it does not suit her drawings. There is no contradiction. Valuing a possibility and consenting to its conditions are different questions. Hope permits refusal when it has not become an obligation to secure one outcome at any cost. Revising an intention after new information can be a response to circumstances rather than evidence that the earlier wish was unreal.

Accuracy here does not require an instantaneous inner adjustment. Someone may understand a message while mentally returning to the old scenario. The article sets no deadline for accepting a changed situation and does not grade the strength of feeling. Its practical question is smaller: which action should no longer be taken on the basis of a cancelled agreement? That answer may be available before readiness for another future. Marina can tell her friend that hanging the work has been cancelled while still grieving the lost exhibition. Acknowledging the message and experiencing its consequences each receive their own place. Complete emotional resolution need not precede every small clarification; the clarification itself does not certify that the experience is over.

VIII. The object of hope can change

Hope for this exhibition differs from hope of preserving a relationship with one's creative work. After refusal, the first opportunity has closed, while the second question remains open. They can be distinguished without declaring one wish trivial and the other elevated. This particular exhibition mattered: it brought together a time, people and prepared work. An abstract thought that many opportunities lie ahead cannot fully replace it. If she wants, however, Marina can ask which parts of the project still matter independently of this venue. Does she need a public exhibition, a conversation with a few friends, or the chance to finish the series? No answer is prescribed. The question can identify a new object of hope without proving that the refusal was beneficial.

Changing the object of hope must not become an order to find a smaller result. A person may choose no substitute project for now. Conversely, showing the drawings to a few friends does not require treating the earlier loss as insignificant. Different events can have different scales without competing against each other. It matters not to promise that every alternative route will turn out better than the original. Its qualities have yet to be seen. We can check whether a new step is available, whether others consent, and whether we remain interested, without assigning hidden compensation to an unknown future. Lack of interest also informs a decision. Hope remains a voluntary relationship to a possibility, not a demand to extract the correct opportunity from every closed route.

Sometimes the object of hope moves closer: from an entire future path to the possibility of returning to a conversation next week. Closeness does not make the hope weak. It names the horizon someone is currently willing to discuss. Another reader may prefer a large project, religious trust or extended waiting without further action. These positions need not be ranked by maturity or strength. A different question matters: does the person understand the expectation being expressed and the promises attached to it? An honestly named small wish need not appear as the opening to a great success. A meeting, conversation or completed drawing can have value of its own while the question of later events remains unanswered.

IX. A plan for another outcome does not cancel the wish

Preparing for an alternative outcome can sometimes feel disloyal to hope. Marina may fear that thinking about refusal means she no longer truly wants the exhibition. Yet describing an action in case of refusal neither produces that refusal nor establishes an absence of desire. She can decide whom to inform and which orders not to place before confirmation. This concerns organisation, not prediction. Equally, readers need not experience every imaginable failure in advance. A particular question is useful according to whether it helps with a decision within reach. Listing every conceivable misfortune can become an endless task of its own; the article does not require it as proof of rationality or complete readiness for the future.

Preparation can be limited to one actual difference. If accepted, Marina will clarify the delivery date; if refused, she will cancel the provisional hanging arrangement. Before the decision, both branches describe possible actions. They do not require equally long lists, identical feelings or equal appeal. Nor does writing them down make every outcome painless. It merely distinguishes a promise from a conditional arrangement in advance. This clarity matters to the person helping: he knows that his task still depends on confirmation. Alternatives are best discussed with the participants' consent, however. One person may find planning convenient now, while another needs only to know when further information will arrive. No universally correct depth of preparation is assigned here.

The same boundary applies to a review date. Agreeing to revisit the question after the promised reply date is one action. Requiring a daily test of whether enough hope remains is quite another. The first concerns an external message and a possible decision; the second can turn one's mood into an object of continuous assessment. Readers can choose a suitable time to reconsider a plan without inventing an optimism examination. If the date changes again, circumstances and agreements become the matters to clarify. Nobody must explain why they feel less inspired than before. Preparing for several outcomes can preserve a person's freedom to experience waiting differently, without paying for every cautious choice through a public demonstration of belief in the future.

X. Leaving an open place for the future

Hope without a guarantee is not a special technique that secretly guarantees a better result. Promising that an honest relationship to uncertainty must bring success would merely restore the original substitution in a more persuasive form. The proposed position has a different scale: distinguish wishes, information and available participation so that each receives its own name. It may neither make waiting easy nor alter other people's decisions. A person can nevertheless avoid presenting the unknown as knowledge. They can acknowledge the importance of a result without claiming that its importance compels the world to provide it. This is an ethical and practical distinction, not a measured law, a reward for maturity or a universal definition of correct human hope.

For Marina, today's open future consists of several different things. The venue's decision may still be unknown; her interest in drawing already exists; her friend's help is available within agreed limits. These cannot be added together as though they become confirmation of the exhibition. Nor must everything present be erased because confirmation is missing. She can choose an action, defer it or revise it after the answer. An outcome that differs from her wish changes a particular part of the story. It cannot retrospectively make the drawings nonexistent or the sincere offer of help never offered. Such specificity can be preserved without a compulsory story that failure was necessary for something better and has already produced a hidden benefit.

An open place need not be filled immediately. Sometimes it is enough to say that one does not yet know which outcome to hope for next but is willing to discuss available support. Sometimes a person names a large project confidently while leaving the route unknown. Religious hope with its own grounds is also possible; it should not be confused with a forecast of a particular decision. There is no single correct scale here. There is an opportunity to speak more precisely and choose more freely: what do I want, what is actually known, and with whom can I discuss a specific form of participation? The future remains future. The present already permits some honest words, bounded actions and relationships in which we can stay alongside a person without promising responsibility for what has not yet happened.

What this means in practice

If you wish, choose one current possibility rather than your entire future. On paper or in conversation, name the desired outcome, known information and available participation. A short, accurate note suffices for each: what you want, communications and circumstances actually known, and a specific action with its boundaries. The unknown can remain unknown, without a reassuring number, explanation or compulsory positive conclusion. If the reflection does not fit your situation now, leave it aside.

You may check one agreement: who is willing to help, with what, when, and under which condition? Do not supply another person's answer; make an offer and allow time for a response. Name your own step's ending: finish the existing list, rather than improve it until all doubt disappears. Check for conflicts with existing commitments or dependence on unreceived confirmation. Neither note nor agreement promises changed feelings or the wanted outcome.

Finally, identify which new message would justify revisiting the plan. This is no deadline for confidence or forgetting an earlier wish. After refusal, changed conditions or confirmation, ask what changes in action and participation. Feelings can remain open. This authorial description is neither psychological treatment nor a tested procedure for improving chances. You can stop after one distinction, use another conversation, or leave your hope undiscussed for now.

Key quotation

> *then do we with patience wait for it.*

Romans 8:25, final clause. Displayed King James Version; the context is Christian expectation of redemption.

Connections between traditions

1. **An unknown outcome and present participation.** Romans 8:24–25 connects waiting for the unseen with Christian hope; Epictetus 1 distinguishes one's own action from externals. The comparable line is not to present current participation as a future already received. Here it opens an editorial question about the limits of a promise. The difference is fundamental: redemption and moral freedom have different grounds. Neither passage supplies a modern venue's decision or establishes one shared doctrine of hope.

2. **Deliberation before a step.** In Rhetoric II.5, displayed lines 127–128, an expectation of escape relates to considering possible action; Enchiridion 29 proposes examining an undertaking and its consequences. The comparable line is that a question can precede action while the outcome remains unknown. Aristotle's context is persuasion; Epictetus offers moral counsel. The bounded task proposed here is neither their universal instruction nor a clinical procedure or promise of victory.

3. **Help and its ground.** Rhetoric II.5, lines 130–134, considers perceived resources and support; Romans 8:26–27 speaks of the Spirit's help. We can compare the role of a ground of trust without mixing its objects. Asking whether a friend agrees to a specific task belongs to the present invented example. A human resource is not identical with the Spirit, and trust within a religious text does not confirm an agreement between two people.

4. **Difficulty does not settle the whole meaning of waiting.** The contest in Epictetus 29 allows preparation without secured victory; Romans 8:18–23 retains suffering within the expectation of redemption. The comparable line is that a desired future does not remove present difficulty. The sources offer no shared promise that every effort pays off. The editorial possibility of pausing or changing a project is not derived as a direct instruction from either Christian expectation or the stringent historical identity of a philosopher.

5. **Confidence needs its own name.** Rhetoric II.5, lines 132/135, presents different grounds of confidence; Epictetus 1 draws a moral boundary between one's own and the external. Comparing them supports an editorial question: does a confident voice describe information, feeling or a chosen action? This concerns particular speech, not an ancient mathematical test. Emotional persuasiveness and moral intention do not measure chances; the historical distinction does not erase real constraints or external harm.

Primary sources

1. Aristotle. Rhetoric II.5. Internet Classics Archive English labelled W. Rhys Roberts. The complete selected chapter on fear/confidence was read, alongside its header and II.1 lines 27–36. Historical reasoning about speech, not an empirical assessment of chances. The current online presentation date is not established.

2. Epictetus. Enchiridion 1,29. Both complete selected sections and the header were read; displayed English labelled Elizabeth Carter, with modernization date not established. The epigraph is the exact opening sentence of 1. Its Russian counterpart is United Wisdom's own translation of the displayed English, not an attributed published Russian translation. Historical demands and invulnerability claims are not adopted as present norms.

3. Romans 8:18–27. Complete selected passage read in the King James Version displayed by Bible Gateway. The key quotation is the final clause of 8:25; the Russian is United Wisdom's own translation from KJV. The Public Domain label does not establish a worldwide licence. The Christian context of redemption and the Spirit is retained. Raw source texts are not imported or vectorized.

Tags

hope, uncertainty, desire, likelihood, unknown, forecast, confidence, trust, waiting, action, limits of action, support, participation, agreement, consent, promise, responsibility, revising a plan, choice, alternative outcome, creativity, exhibition, everyday life, faith, Christian hope, redemption, Aristotle, Epictetus, Romans, primary sources

About the authors

Andrey Zarinsh is the author and founder of United Wisdom. He explores inner transformation, the unity of traditions, intercultural dialogue, and contemporary spiritual discipline. Instagram: @andrey.zarinsh.

Maria Evilkut is a co-author of United Wisdom. Alongside her research, she seeks to test these ideas in practice and observe how principles of unity and mutual understanding work in real life between people and cultures. Instagram: @ilkutki.