

Why does hope matter? On one common view hope just is a desire for some state of affairs that one believes is possible, and there is no reason to think that all hopes matter (many are trivial). Many have argued that hope matters only when it sustains agency under conditions of adversity that invite despair. Against this view, I argue that a good account of why hopes matters to agents should do two things: (1) enable us to see why the capacity to hope, no matter how trivial the hopes are, is an interesting and significant capacity; and (2) enable us to see why a certain range of hopes that only agents can have are distinctively important but without insisting that the hopes that matter to agents must be able to sustain agency even under conditions of extreme adversity. I try to sketch out what such an account would look like and examine the role that cultural narratives (including legal narratives) play in sustaining or dampening hope.