

Dealing with Uncertainty/ Anxiety During the Coronavirus Pandemic and Your Mental Health.

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Life is filled with uncertainty, especially at times like this. While many things remain outside your control, your mindset is key to coping with difficult circumstances and facing the unknown.

Uncertainty is all around us, never more so than today. The current COVID-19 pandemic has heightened uncertainty over the economy, employment, finances, relationships, and of course, physical and mental health. Yet as human beings, we crave security. We want to feel safe and have a sense of control over our lives and well-being. Fear and uncertainty can leave you feeling stressed, anxious, and powerless over the direction of your life. It can drain you emotionally and trap you in a downward spiral of endless “what-ifs” and worst-case scenarios about what tomorrow may bring.

The following tips can help you to:

Focus on controlling those things that are under your control

Challenge your need for certainty. Learn to better tolerate, even embrace, the inevitable uncertainty of life. Reduce your anxiety and stress levels.

Tip 1: Act over the things you can control

Much about life is uncertain at the moment and many things remain outside of your control. But while you can't control the spread of a virus, the recovery of the economy, or whether you'll have a paycheck next week, you're not totally powerless. Whatever your fears or personal circumstances, instead of worrying about the uncontrollable, try to refocus your mind on acting over the aspects that are within your control.

For example, if you've lost your job or income during this difficult time, you still have control over how much energy you put into searching online for work, sending out resumes, or networking with your contacts. Similarly, if you're worried about your health amid the coronavirus pandemic, you can act by regularly washing your hands, cleaning surfaces, avoiding crowds, and looking out for vulnerable friends and neighbours. By focusing on the aspects of a problem that you can control in this way, you'll switch from ineffective worrying and pondering into active problem-solving. Of course, all circumstances are different and

you may find that in some situations all you can control is your attitude and emotional response.

Tip 2: Challenge your need for certainty

While uncertainty and change are inescapable parts of life, we often adopt behaviours to try to cope with the discomfort they can bring. In addition to worrying through every possible scenario, you may:

Excessively seek reassurance from others. You repeatedly ask friends or loved ones if you're making the right decision, endlessly research information online, or seek out expert advice in an effort to remove uncertainty from your life. Micromanage people by refusing to delegate tasks to others, either at work or at home. You'll find ways to delay or postpone acting or avoid certain situations all together in an attempt to prevent bad things from happening. Repeatedly check things. You call or text your family, friends, or kids, again and again, to make sure they're safe. You check and re-check emails, texts, or forms before sending, double-check lists to ensure you haven't missed anything.

Tip 3 Focus on the present

Uncertainty is often centred on worries about the future and all the bad things you can anticipate happening. It can leave you feeling hopeless and depressed about the days ahead, exaggerate the scope of the problems you face, and even paralyze you from acting to overcome a problem.

One of the surest ways to avoid worrying about the future is to focus on the present. Instead of trying to predict what might happen, switch your attention to what's happening right now. By being fully connected to the present, you can interrupt the negative assumptions and catastrophic predictions running through your mind.

You can learn to purposely focus your attention on the present through mindfulness. With regular practice, mindfulness can help change your preoccupation with future worries to a stronger appreciation of the present moments as well as help calm your mind, ease stress, and boost your overall mood.

Seneca Security personnel are trained in Mental Health First Aid and ready to assist you via the Seneca Safe App: <https://www.senecacollege.ca/about/security/seneca-safe.html>

You can also access the Well-being Resource recording session on [Leadership & Employee Development \(LED\)](#) website and other great resources offered to staff.

Security can be contacted by the information below

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