

Finding control in uncertain times

With COVID-19, so much is happening and changing so quickly that it can be hard to make sense of the world around you. To complicate things, the unknown creates anxiety, uneasiness, stress, and fear. To help you manage uncertain times, it is important to remember, “Uncertainty is a certain thing.” According to psychiatrist Dr. Abigail Brenner (2019), circumstances change, and things do not always stay as they are as a result. Being more open and flexible to change makes you more resilient for when things happen. When you feel lost in uncertainty, Brenner suggests these tips.

- **Focus on what you can control.** Rely on the things in your life that you can count on to stay stable and build your life around them. Habits and familiarity can bring peace when other aspects of life are “off.” Maintaining or creating a routine can help you navigate your day. Find ways to conquer the unknown or your fears by choosing to be positive, choosing to have some fun, and choosing to find joy.
- **Keep expectations at bay.** If you dwell on what you think should happen or on a certain outcome, you may become frustrated and upset if things go another way.
- **Look for opportunities.** Sometimes difficult times introduce possibilities that you did not know existed.
- **Take a mental inventory.** Both positive and negative thoughts or emotions influence the way in which you interpret and therefore react to events. If you catch yourself thinking negatively or in terms of worse-case scenarios, try to turn negative thinking into a positive. For example, what is it that you CAN do? How can you best manage a bad situation?
- **Don't let fear paralyze you.** While fear and the unknown can be protective, it can also negatively affect your mind, body, and spirit if you let it take charge and prevent you from living.
- **Manage stress.** There are many ways to manage anxiety and stress including physical activity, healthy eating, proper sleep hygiene, engaging creativity, and meditation.
- **Surround yourself with support.** Family and close friends contribute to emotional support, self-esteem, and self-confidence. The people closest to you will also listen and demonstrate empathy. They can also help you sort and make sense of evidenced-based information so that you can be more educated about what is going on.

Reference:

Brenner, A. (2019). Psychology Today. 5 Tips to Help You Live with Uncertainty ...and learn to love what you don't know. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-flux/201912/5-tips-help-you-live-uncertainty>

Source:

Amy F. Kostelic, Adult Development and Aging Specialist