

Dealing With Uncertainty

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We are living in uncertain times. No one knows exactly how or when this coronavirus pandemic will end — or what it will mean for our lives and the lives of our loved ones in the future.

There's so much to worry about: health, finances, even our social fabric.

We are asking ourselves how we get through this and what the world will look like when it's over — or waking up wondering how to get through another day of dealing with all the normal life stuff with constant uncertainty whirring in the background.

This pandemic that we're all going through feels unprecedented — but the feeling of uncertainty is not.

Here are seven tips about uncertainty from people who've been there.

1. Reflect.

Check in with yourself. Allow yourself to get in touch with how you're feeling. Reflect both on what's hard *and* on what's still good. Maybe that's in a journal or through a prayer or a conversation with a friend.

It doesn't matter *how* you reflect, just that you find time to pause and take stock in the midst of this crisis.

If you find it difficult to journal it may be useful to write down just one or two lines about how you are feeling each day.

2. Don't "should" on yourself.

There's no right way to get through a difficult time. Some people get super productive. Others, not so much. Let go of the pressure of other people's expectations.

There are so many messages out there of what you should be doing, what you could be doing. How you should feel

Don't *should* on yourself. Those are words to remember.

After you stop obsessing about what you *should* do, find some things you *want* to do — things that take your mind off your worries during uncertain times.

3. Know when to shut it down.

Pick a time and shut it down.

That might mean zoning out with a movie, ordering takeout, letting the kids eat cereal for dinner — whatever you need to do. Accept that some days, especially when you're under a lot of stress, you have only so much bandwidth.

4. Find your "best gift" for the day.

Once you've set aside external expectations and taken time to recharge, that might free up energy to do good, meaningful, even productive things.

Ask yourself, "How do I give my best gift today?"

We all have our thing — our "best gift." Maybe for you it's baking a pie or organizing a closet or conquering a video game. Whatever it is, find the "best gift" you can give yourself and/or the world that day.

Think about what feels meaningful or gives you a sense of accomplishment and do that.

5. Move past shame.

Uncertain times mean navigating changes in your life that you can't control. They may mean doing things differently, even reaching out for help — that's part of being resilient, and it's nothing to be ashamed of.

Overcoming feelings of shame in asking for help allows you to take the necessary steps to get through this period of your life.

6. Find your "resilience circle."

It's important to connect with people who will lift you up and point you in the right direction. These friends can be your "resilience circle."

It's important to remember we are not alone.

If you don't talk to others it can feel like you're in a ditch by yourself. So, call, video-chat or text with a friend; join an online community; or even go old-school and write a letter.

7. Don't try to make sense of things too soon.

It can be tempting to rush through an uncertain situation and try to make it seem certain — to fill in blanks, leap ahead to what might be next. Just don't.

We are meaning-making creatures, we can't help drawing lessons and meaning from every single thing we're in.

Or at least trying to find reasons for things. Sometimes there *isn't* a reason. Things are just hard.

So the last tip is more about what we should *not* do than what we *should* do.

Don't fast-forward, and run the tape of doom and get sucked into that hole. Don't try to make sense of things too soon.

That leaves room for new possibilities.