

Coping with Uncertainty



“One’s life is not as fixed as one believes. Surprises may lie in store for you, the unexpected often tends to happen, sometimes bringing in its train the most delightful change in one’s life or circumstances.”

- Elizabeth Aston

“ If you don’t like something, change it. If you can’t change it, change your attitude.”

- Maya Angelou

One thing that is certain in life is uncertainty. We face changes and uncertainty throughout our lives whether it be in our relationships, work situations, health or finances to name but a few common sources. We all deal with change differently but first and foremost we need to acknowledge the changes and think about how to best serve ourselves in dealing with the unexpected and coping in the best way possible. Being able to accept that the unexpected happens is a significant trait in people who are seen as more resilient to change.

Acceptance is not the same as resignation. We don’t have to be completely passive in life but it is helpful to work out what are the battles worth fighting and what unchangeable realities we face. CiC offer a range of onsite solutions to help work and manage with change, ensuring staff get the best support at the right time. Solutions include mediation, executive coaching on an individual or group basis, onsite redundancy support, careers coaching and training. Specialist consultants can also provide risk assessments, stress audits and bespoke training. For more practical advice you can call the CiC 24-hour Confidential Care Adviceline.

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Perception, control and resilience

First and foremost, our perception of events is key. Check and consider your take on events, and ask others if you find input helpful to gain perspective. When you have fully acknowledged and reflected objectively on your situation, action can be taken.

We can't always choose what happens to us but we do have a choice about how we handle approaching challenges. Consider what has helped you in the past and how you can best help yourself. What supports you in life and what soothes you in times of stress?

Generally we can choose to face the uncertainty and work out how we might change the situation, or we can accept the uncertainty and think through how we can expand our capacity to cope. In an ideal world we might think about how to

amalgamate both these options to increase our resiliency whilst being realistic about our options.

Having a sense of control even when being buffeted about by life's challenges means putting your thinking and responsibility in the executive. Asking for help when you need it, whilst taking responsibility for your behaviour.

Resilience can grow with practice and experience but here are some factors to consider when preparing yourself for difficult times ahead.

Practice healthy habits and take responsibility for looking after yourself. Get enough rest, exercise and maintain a healthy diet. Invest time in reflecting on your thoughts, feelings and behaviours, with friends, relatives or professional help.

What Helps?

Observe what calms and soothes you. It's easy to catastrophise and panic in the face of change, but it rarely helps. Engage your thinking whilst acknowledging your feelings to help guide you in what to do next. We all need time and space to think, but in particular when we're feeling anxious and panicky about life circumstances. Ensure you carve out time to reflect and process difficult episodes. This will help you to respond rather than react and may prove invaluable and save time later on down the line.

Remember you can move away or take a break from yourself and your situation. If overwhelmed, activities that overwhelm your senses can be of help, such as the cinema, music, social events, sleep or exercise. Think about what has helped you through trials and tribulations in your history. Make a list of things that help you when you're struggling in life and keep hold of it.

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Energise

When you feel ready, shift your energies from the problem to potential solutions. If you're someone for whom thinking is stimulated by others, ask for help or even think about support groups or professional support if appropriate.

Remember, the only thing that is permanent is impermanency, so whatever you're going through, this too shall pass. Use your energies to think how best to support yourself. If you're good at caring for others but are less focused on your own self-care, have a think about how you would support a friend going through similar stages.



Ask for help

In the face of adversity, drawing strength from others can prove particularly valuable. Reach out to others in a similar situation; often charities and the public sector have support in place for people going through stressful periods in their life. Sometimes we need people to really understand and empathise with our situation before we can look at how to move on. People who take up voluntary roles quickly add to their social network and often report a satisfaction and positivity from giving to others.

The easiest thing to do in these circumstances is to withdraw, and this may prove the least helpful reaction. Shouldering a crisis or challenge on our own can be isolating and worsen our situation. We all need others to a greater or lesser extent and you will be the best ambassador of what you need. The great paradox of life is that the more we are able to accept the twists and turns of life, the more we are able to cope and be resilient, and in turn, the better equipped we are to make the changes that we might desire.

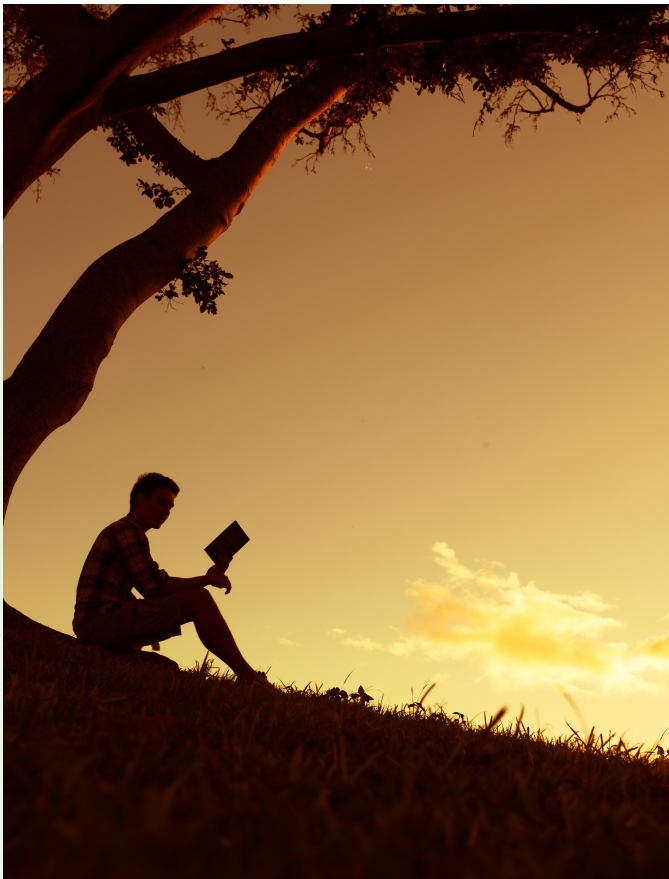


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Further Help

When you feel ready, shift your energies from the problem to potential solutions. If you're someone for whom thinking is stimulated by others, ask for help or even think about support groups or professional support if appropriate.

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Books

Embracing Uncertainty by Susan Jeffers

Uncertainty: Turning Fear and Doubt into Fuel For Brilliance by Jonathan Fields

Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty by Zygmunt Bauman

Dancing with Fear: Overcoming Anxiety in a World of Stress and Uncertainty by Paul Foxman

The Little Book of Thinking Errors: A Self help guide to Changing Unhelpful Thoughts by Kevin M. O'Doherty