



Adapting to Change and Coping with Uncertainty

Do you enjoy being told what to do? Neither do I. Neither do any of us. And yet, here we are having change thrust upon us, coming at us from all sides, often leaving behind more questions than answers. Our workplace is different, our routines are different, the way we interact with others is different, our home life is different, and almost none of this has been our choice. That's a tough pill to swallow for many of us who prefer better agency over our own lives. With so many things changing rapidly, it's easy to become overwhelmed. While it can feel as though everything in your life is different right now, it's important to recognize that some things can and will stay the same. In times like these, attending to structure can bring some much-needed relief.

- **Make a list of the things that are not changing**
 - Use these “anchors” to help with stress management
- **Whenever possible, adhere to a consistent routine**
 - Bedtime
 - Wake time
 - Meal time
 - Time to exercise
 - Time to relax
 - Time to engage (even if it's in a virtual format) with people close to you

As you use existing structure to orient yourself to the new (temporary) “normal,” it's also important to allow for some predictable anxiety and some silly mistakes along the way. You might find yourself being a little more clumsy or forgetful right now. You might notice that “little things” make you feel nervous or irritable. Be kind and forgiving with yourself during this time. Change is difficult, and we all deserve a little space to recalibrate.

If you find yourself feeling nervous and unfocused more often than not, try the following:

- **Practice deep-breathing techniques**
 - Inhale deeply through your nose for a count of 4, hold the breath for a count of 7, exhale slowly for a count of 8. Repeat for 5 – 10 cycles of breath.
- **Write down the things you're worried about and separate them into two categories**
 - For “things I have control over,” make a plan and do something about them. It feels good to be able to cross something off your list, and it can help you rebalance your perspective.
 - For “things I don't have control over,” work on letting go. If there's nothing you can do about it right now, wasting energy fretting won't make anything better. Set these items aside until or unless there is something you can reasonably do about them.

- **If your mind starts racing, try a technique called “thought stopping.”**
 - Close your eyes and picture a big red stop sign.
 - Say to yourself, “Stop. Stop, stop, stop.”
 - Bring yourself back to focus on the present moment and the task at hand by engaging as many of your senses as you can to notice what is real and true in this moment.
- **If you find yourself dwelling on the “what-ifs” or the worst-case scenario, this is called “catastrophizing.”**
 - It helps to recognize that what you’re afraid of isn’t actually happening now. It’s a fear, not a reality.
 - Instead of allowing your thoughts to run wild, shift into disaster planning mode. Instead of “what-if,” try thinking about “if, then...” instead.