

Live Well, Work Well

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Managing Uncertainty During the Pandemic

Uncertainty has become a familiar foe during the pandemic. As new variants of the coronavirus circulate and guidelines frequently change, you may be finding it difficult to cope with the developments and understand what they mean. It's important to remember that you are not the only one who feels that way.

Although post-pandemic life seems far out of reach, there are healthy ways for you to manage any uncertainty, anxiety and stress.

The Pandemic's Impact on Decision-Making

Since the pandemic has imposed the need for constant risk assessment, daily tasks and decision-making are becoming more difficult for many. As Americans remain in limbo between their pre- and post-pandemic lives, they're stressed or overwhelmed with decision-making.

According to an American Psychological Association [survey](#), roughly one-third of adults (32%) said sometimes they're so stressed about the pandemic that they struggle to make basic decisions, such as what to wear or eat, and major life decisions. Millennials particularly struggle with this compared with other age groups. Furthermore, 63% of adults said uncertainty causes stress, and 49% said the pandemic has made planning for their future feel impossible.

These findings aren't surprising, as it's natural to default to anxiety when faced with a potential threat or uncertainty. Everyone copes with anxiety differently, so it's crucial to be aware of your response and approach.

Coping With Uncertainty

Uncertainty is a fact of life—and it tends to become more of a problem if you try to avoid it. The timing and feasibility of post-pandemic life remain a mystery, but there are healthy ways to handle ambiguity. Consider the following strategies for coping with pandemic-fueled uncertainty:

- **Focus on what you can control.** Focusing on the things you can't control, like the course of the pandemic and the actions of others, will only fuel frustration and stress. Instead, focus on things you have control over, such as wearing a mask and choosing environments or social situations you are comfortable with.
- **Find a routine.** As the pandemic seems unpredictable, developing a routine can help you stay productive and active. Your rituals or routines can help you feel in control. For example, wake up and go to sleep at the same time every day, eat meals at a regular time, exercise or move daily, or commit to reaching out to family and friends daily.
- **Take a timeout.** If you're feeling overwhelmed, focus your energy on something that brings you joy. Taking some "me time" can be a reset and help minimize your anxiety or stress.
- **Make plans, but remain flexible.** If the pandemic has taught anything, it's that you need to be flexible and adjust to the circumstances. Having something to look forward to is good for your mood, but your plans may require a day-by-day approach to ensure safety and feasibility.
- **Lean on your network.** It's well-known that loneliness can take a toll on your mental health, so try to regularly connect with your community, family and friends. Ensure your connections are intentional.

Much of the pandemic and its related issues are out of your control, but dealing with associated challenges in a healthy way can make you more resilient in the long run. When you build up your resilience, you will be more likely to focus on new goals and a hopeful future.

Summary

You live in uncertain times, and nobody knows exactly what will come next. Being in a state of prolonged uncertainty can be extremely stressful; however, you can control your mindset and approach to pandemic-related changes or situations.

If you're worried about your mental well-being, reach out to a doctor or mental health professional to ensure you're getting the help you need as you navigate life amid a pandemic.

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