Keeping anxiety in check in the face of uncertainty



Hardly a day goes by without alarming news about natural disasters, terrorism, political strife at home and abroad, economic threats and violence. If that wasn't enough, many of us are also concerned about our jobs, our health, our relationships and our finances. It's no wonder that this seemingly constant uncertainty is causing many of us a great deal of anxiety.

What's your tolerance for uncertainty?

Some people have more resilience to or tolerance for uncertainty, challenges and negative events. Others have less tolerance and this can make them feel:

- Irritable
- Angry
- Sad
- Frightened
- Helpless
- Confused
- Worried
- Exhausted

Although we all differ in how much of life's uncertainty we can tolerate, there are ways to increase our resilience and better cope with an ever-changing world.

- **Limit exposure to news and social media. Especially** avoid the news before bedtime.
- **Avoid catastrophizing.** Catastrophizing means thinking that the worst possible things will happen. Don't let your fears overtake your emotions. Instead, write them down then ask yourself if they're likely to happen. You'll see that the worst case scenarios probably won't happen and you'll be able to focus on managing the situation.
- **Control what you can.** Focus on the things that are within your control, such as household or work projects. Try to establish routines to give you some comforting structure to your week.
- **Breathe, breathe, breathe.** When the unexpected happens or you see something on the news that upsets you, focus on deep breathing to calm both your mind and body.
    - Breathe in slowly through your nose for 5-7 seconds.
    - Hold your breath in for 3-4 seconds.
    - Breathe out slowly through pursed lips as if you're whistling for 7-8 seconds.
    - Repeat these steps several times.
- **Take care of yourself.** You're better able to cope with uncertainty if you're physically and mentally prepared. Make efforts to eat well, exercise and get enough sleep.
- **Seek support from those you trust.** Many people isolate themselves when they're stressed or worried. But social support is important, so reach out to family and friends.

If you're having trouble managing stress and coping with uncertainty on your own, ask for help. Contact us for more information, support and resources.