

# Managing Uncertainty During the Pandemic

## You Should Know

Almost everything about the coronavirus pandemic is uncertain: how many people will be affected, how much will the economy and job market will be impacted, how soon things will return to “normal.” Uncertainty can cause feelings of extreme discomfort. Uncertainty might also lead you to focus on worst-case scenarios, which can then interfere with your ability to solve problems or make decisions.

While uncertainty can be frightening, panic and worry are ineffective methods of preparing for unforeseen events. And consider this – uncertainty will likely elevate your stress hormones, which can compromise your immune system, making you even more vulnerable to illness.

## What to Do

Here are some suggestions for managing uncertainty during the coronavirus pandemic. First, think of a time you successfully handled uncertainty, and then answer the following questions.

What was the situation?

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How did you react?

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What strengths and skills did you tap into?

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To whom did you reach out for support?

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What did you learn about yourself from this experience?

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Next, focus on things you can control during this pandemic, such as steps you can take to protect yourself. This can include:

- washing your hands frequently.
- avoiding touching your face.
- staying home as much as possible, even if you feel well.
- avoiding non-essential shopping and travel.
- practicing social distancing by staying 6-10 feet away from others in public.
- getting enough sleep and eating well, which supports your immune system.
- following recommendations from official health agencies like the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization.

What other ways can you protect yourself that are within your control?

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Now, consider things you can address in your daily life, like helping your child with homework, creating a meal plan, organizing a group online chat with extended family, or using a mindfulness app to stay calm and focused.

What are some things you can solve, change, or control in your daily life?

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Even in the best of times, uncertainty is just a part of life. While the level of uncertainty caused by the coronavirus pandemic is unprecedented, the reality is this situation will eventually end, and life will go on. It might be helpful to comfort yourself with statements like, "I can get through this," or, "This is really hard, but I've overcome challenges before."

What are some affirmations, meditations, or words of wisdom you can use to help you get through this difficult time?

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Write down the names of friends and family members you can count on for emotional support or a good laugh when you are worried or feeling depressed.

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### **Reflections on This Exercise**

Which activities were most effective in helping you manage uncertainty?

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Are you better able to manage feelings or thoughts associated with uncertainty? Explain.

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