

# wee tips to dealing with 'what if's' and uncertainty



## Trying to control things

Life is full of uncertainty. Trying to control everything to have the outcomes that we want is an illusion and also can make us less resilient to the natural changes and adaptation that life will throw at us e.g. COVID19 and lockdown, now who could have predicted or controlled that to everyone's satisfaction?

## Worrying

Most of us don't like uncertainty it can make us feel anxious and afraid. we don't know what may come next and we worry whatever it is, we won't be able to handle it. If we lock into that worry and all the things which may go wrong, which we don't think we can cope with, we can feel overwhelmed, maybe even feel hopeless, depressed, demotivated. Thinking where is the point?

## Suicidal thoughts

Sometimes people find they have thoughts of suicide when it all becomes too much and the feelings of 'what if' become too exhausting. If you are having thoughts of suicide, please speak to someone about how you feel and what you are finding overwhelming. It can help to talk to someone.

## Negative thoughts

Uncertainty breeds uncertainty! When we begin to imagine all the various 'what if' scenarios (which are usually negative, we can end up imaging even more 'what if' scenarios)! We have great imaginations, but rarely do we lie awake in the wee hours of the morning, unable to sleep thinking about all the super wonderful things which are going to happen to us! This focus on what can go wrong can make us feel negative, which in turn, can programme us into looking for more things to be negative about and feeling like that.....we find them. This does not leave us feeling jolly!

## Stuck inside your own head

Spending too much time inside our own head about how we feel can in itself increase our feelings of anxiety and depression. We find our minds stuck in this thinking loop where we keep going round and round thinking, or, talking about whatever it is we have focused on as a source of 'what if'.

## Negative influences

The impact of other people can also affect the 'what if's'. What we say and do has an effect on others as does what they think and do, have an effect on us. Being around others who repeatedly focus on negative outcomes; even when you are trying to be positive, can be exhausting. Also, watching news reports, following social media, other communication mediums which have a focus on 'Its Bad, it's going to get worse'. "Oh, and did you know about this new thing to worry about...?" Again, doesn't fill us with hope for the future. That doesn't mean we don't need to be informed, it's all about balance.

## Uncertainty

Uncertainty basically means we aren't sure what is going to happen next. We look to see what is happening now and then try and predict from that, what may happen next. Depending on our thinking styles, any predisposition we maybe have to anxiety or low mood may affect how we adjust and prepare to deal with this state of 'not knowing', 'not feeling in control' and the level of stress this uncertainty is likely to cause us.

Part of dealing with the 'what ifs' is being resilient to change. Even when it's a change we may not have chosen, the speed at which you decide to respond to the change in a way that is most helpful for us and those close to us, will impact on how we deal with that change. It maybe you need help to come to terms with the change, and that's okay, we all at times need someone to talk to.

### Self-compassion

We are all different. Don't beat yourself up if you find others maybe respond better to change and uncertainty than you do, be kind, we all have things which can stress us out. Being kind and showing compassion for yourself is more likely to help you find a way through than being self-critical. That just drains energy.



### Learning new skills



Depending on what happens next, we may need to learn something new. That maybe a new way of doing something, it may mean a new way of using your income to meet your outgoings, it may mean learning new skills to seek employment in areas which you have never thought about before.

### Be flexible

If we think of the analogy of the tree which bends in the wind, it helps us realise if we are flexible to the 'what happens next' and learn to go with the flow, don't allow the 'what ifs' to overwhelm recognise maybe that things need to change and while that maybe hard to accept, in time acceptance will lead to more peace of mind than holding onto a memory of a reality which has gone.

### Good habits

Practice tools which support your wellbeing. Get into the habit of going a walk, reading a book, doing some form of relaxation or Mindfulness practice. Be aware of what you eat and drink and how you cope with negative feelings. Avoid misuse of drugs, alcohol, or gambling harms. Any release of stress is short lived and in time will lead to more challenges.



### Inner voice

Taking control where you can is important. Sometimes we get so caught up in the 'what ifs' which we feel are in other hands, we forget what is within our own control. Become aware of our inner voice and the story we tell ourselves and be wary we don't tell ourselves we can't, when in fact we are really saying we choose not to.

### It's okay to ask for support, here are some ideas:

- If you are thinking of suicide due to worrying about the 'what ifs' phone the Samaritans **T: 116 123**
- Or **text SHOUT to 85258** to text with a trained Crisis Volunteer
- Speak to your GP about mental health services you can link to
- This link takes you to information on a variety of support for anxiety:  
**[www.supportline.org.uk/problems/anxiety](http://www.supportline.org.uk/problems/anxiety)**
- Campaign to look after your mental health **[www.clearyourhead.scot](http://www.clearyourhead.scot)**

You matter, how you feel matters. It's ok not to be ok and to ask for support

Find other tips for wellbeing at:

**[www.cope-scotland.org](http://www.cope-scotland.org)** and

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