

Wellness Wednesdays Update (each entry is its own page)

Emotional Wellness

The Only Certainty...

Uncertainty is one of the most difficult stressors we have to address in our daily lives. When there is ambiguity about some aspect of our future, it means we have to use extra mental resources and energy to predict what might happen and make choices based on suboptimal information. The combination of uncertainty with a potential of negative outcomes leaves many of us feeling understandably anxious.

A measured amount of anxiety can be helpful, though—don't think it's all bad! It helps us examine our options and prevents us from making less-than-thoughtful decisions. The ability to think through multiple scenarios and prepare for any outcome ahead of time is really an amazing capacity that not everyone has. Still, when this process becomes excessive or chronic, it can create substantial physical and mental stress.

An important thing to keep in mind is that our bodies and brains need time to rest and recover from any kind of stress, whether it's from working out or worrying. Exercising and thinking ahead can both be tremendously beneficial, but need to be balanced with other activities that help restore us.

In truth, we've never had any guarantees in life, nor did our ancestors. It's just that in the past, we didn't have as many persistent reminders of this fact! What this proves is that our anxiety about uncertainty is really a matter of how we're focusing our attention in the present. Many times, our concern about the future doesn't actually necessitate we do anything different today.

Focusing on the tasks at hand, and doing things that make an immediate beneficial impact in our lives can be a great help. Once we've been informed about future uncertainties and taken any immediate actions needed, we have the option to put them aside. Turn off the news, put down the phone, and log off social media, at least for a little while. Then try meditating, exercising, or just hanging out with friends. Taking care of ourselves today can be a surprisingly effective remedy for anxiety about tomorrow.

<https://www.ucsf.edu/news/2020/11/418951/theres-lot-uncertainty-right-now-what-science-says-does-our-minds-bodies>