

Coping with Anxiety & Uncertainty about the Future

January 25, 2023 - Bell Let's Talk Campaign - "Let's Change This"

If you are feeling exhausted and numb these days, you are not alone. One in four Canadians have been experiencing high levels of anxiety. Let's change this.

Anxiety about how life will look like in the future is a reality and stressor that many of us face on a daily basis. No matter how helpless you may feel, there are coping mechanisms that helps us better deal with the uncertainty and negative feelings that many of us are going through.

Taking care of your mental health and focusing on things that bring you joy won't make the large-scale issues disappear, but it can improve your daily happiness and outlook on life. Taking the time to incorporate mini self-care and mindset rituals will help process these difficult emotions in healthy ways and make progress towards a more positive mindset.

7 Tips to Try:

1. Focus on What You Can Control

No matter what situation you are in, there are still some things that you can control. For example, recognizing and practicing gratitude for the small things, such as having a roof over your head, food in your belly, and people around you that you love.

Recognizing the small blessings in your life will give you a better perspective of the things you do have right now versus what you do not, and also provides a greater sense of control in your life while avoiding the feeling of being overwhelmed by the larger picture of things.

Focusing in on things we can control can soothe our anxiety by being practical about how we exert our power. Instead of worrying aimlessly, it prompts us to become actively involved in how our experience of daily life is.

2. Be Present

When you fully focus on the present, you don't worry as much. Don't try to predict what may happen, and don't let yourself think of everything that could go wrong. Instead, connect to and appreciate the present moment. If you feel especially anxious, try this practice to ground yourself back to the present moment: *5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste.*

3. Take Care of Your Well-Being

Taking care of your mental and physical well-being means you are more capable to deal with what life throws at you. This includes: Exercise - try to move a little bit daily; Get enough sleep; Spend time outdoors; Do activities that help you relax; Eat a balanced and healthy diet.



4. Eliminate Your Triggers

Do you know what your triggers are? Are you able to avoid or reduce those triggers so that you can worry less? For example, limiting your time on social media might help you feel more optimistic about your life and reduce comparisons.

5. Reflect on Your Need for Certainty

As much as we'd like to, we can never control absolutely everything in our lives. No matter how much we plan and prepare, unexpected events can still happen.

Dealing with change is difficult, even if the change is for the better. To cope with change, try to reframe your thinking and see the positives.

Answer these questions to challenge your need for certainty and reflect on the coping mechanism that you already use.

- What are some good things about uncertainty?
- In the past, did things turn out well even though you were not certain about what would happen?
- What did you do to cope if things did not turn out okay?
- Can you use those coping strategies again?

6. Learn to Tolerate Change & Uncertainty

If you feel ready you can try to build your tolerance for change and uncertainty slowly. Start with something that gives you just a little bit of anxiety.

For example, if you feel the need to drink in social situations, challenge yourself to drink less, or put off your first drink for at least 1 hour into the gathering. Afterwards, reflect on your experience:

- How did you feel?
- What happened? Did everything turn out okay?
- What did you do if things did not go as you expected?

7. Do Not Hesitate to Seek Professional Help

Mental health is something that everyone should be paying attention to. If your anxiety is more than just passing feelings, a mental health therapist can help identify your coping mechanisms.

Counselling is a great way to help you think more clearly and work through your feelings when you are stuck. If you feel ready for professional support, FSEAP's **Counselling, Guided iCBT Program, and Work/Life Balance Support** services can help.