



THE GIFT
OF UNCERTAINTY

Worksheet



BlueChipMINDS

Notes:

THE CERTAINTY OF UNCERTAINTY

You already know how to manage uncertainty!

Every day of your life up until this point has been wrapped in uncertainty and you made it this far! Life offers no guarantees. What we do is, we create stories and assumptions that make us believe there is safety, security and certainty in the familiarity of our everyday lives.

We assume that having a job or a contract provides certainty however, organisations that are committed to growth are constantly updating their strategy and restructuring their workforce. We assume that a good education will lead to our ideal employment, yet there are no guarantees we will land a job linked to our interests. We assume that marriage will provide lifelong security and everlasting love, yet the average length of a marriage is between ten and twelve years. Each day we wake up assuming we will return to our bed that evening. We head out into a world of uncertainty interacting with the people and things in our environment, never really knowing if our heads will safely hit the pillow that night.

There has always been uncertainty and you can be certain, that uncertainty is going to be in your future, you can also be certain that **you already have all you need to manage uncertainty.**

Think of a time when a situation or event you were certain of didn't go as planned. Make a note of the situation below including how you dealt with the unexpected change. Looking back, would you approach anything in relation to your experience differently?

ANXIETY & UNCERTAINTY

It's all well and good to know that we deal with uncertainty every day, yet that doesn't stop the brains stress response from kicking in and activating feelings of anxiety when we are about to step into the unknown. The purpose of the fear response is to get you moving, to make you do something. This switch in your brain wants you to run away, stop in your tracks or pay attention to your surroundings. It was not designed to make you uncomfortable, injured or to hurt you.

With knowledge of fear you can use it effectively to get moving and take action, to do something new, to push through, to focus on your goal. And when you do, your brain will reward your actions with a dose of dopamine and other feel good chemicals.

Fear occurs when you mix uncertainty with anxiety or put simply **Anxiety + Uncertainty = Fear.**



When you feel anxious but know exactly why you feel the way you do, you become nervous.



When you are anxious and have no certainty around what's to come, you begin to feel afraid and fear emerges out of this unknown anxiety.

A helpful way to prevent fear is to separate anxiety from uncertainty. When you are aware of the difference between these two interrelated factors you can deal with anxiety as one challenge and uncertainty as another issue and ideally prevent fear from emerging.

MANAGING ANXIETY

Anxiety is a physical response, the best way to deal with it is physically.

You can reduce feelings of anxiety by changing your physiological state to being alert and calm. There are a number of effective ways to do this when you start to feel anxious. One way is to physically alter the way you look at the world. When stressed or feeling anxious open your focus. Dial out your gaze to a wider panoramic view. This down regulates your stress response by sending signals that you are safe. Another way to mitigate anxiety is to use your breath.

One breathing method you could adopt is Box breathing. It's an effective practice because it not only heightens performance and concentration, it also reduces anxiety.

Box Breathing



Step 1: Slowly Exhale

Slowly exhale through your mouth, getting all the oxygen out of your lungs

Step 2: Slowly Inhale

Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose for the count of four. (counting to four in your head.)

Step 3: Hold Your Breath

Hold your breath for another slow count of four.

Step 4: Exhale Again

Exhale through your mouth for the same slow count of four,

Step 5: Hold Your Breath Again

Hold your breath for the same slow count of four

For best results repeat the cycle four to five times in one sitting. It takes between 2 – 3 minutes in total. As you progress you can increase your count by one second for each round.

Note: If you're new to box breathing, it may be difficult to get the hang of it. You may get dizzy after a few rounds. This is normal. As you practice it more often, you'll be able to go longer without the dizziness. If you get dizzy, stay sitting for a minute and resume normal breathing.

MANAGING UNCERTAINTY

Working through uncertainty is mostly a mental activity that can be as simple as finding evidence to counteract your thoughts of doubt and worry.

Uncertainty is caused by not knowing. In times of uncertainty you can gather information that increases your knowledge about the challenging situation. Increasing your knowledge provides the brain with potential evidence that the uncertain situation can be overcome and begins to stir up feelings of certainty and faith in your abilities.

You can increase your knowledge at a conscious and subconscious level to help create alignment between your thoughts and actions.

Increase knowledge at a Subconscious level

- physically rehearsing
- mentally rehearsing
- recalling a time when you have overcome a similar situation

Increase knowledge at a Conscious level

- Formal study
- Consult with an expert in the field you are experiencing uncertainty
- Reading
- Watching tutorials

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6 STAGES OF CHANGE

1. Precontemplation

The first step in change isn't really a step because we're not changing or have no immediate need to change. This stage may also be a time of Mastery or fine tuning a new skill.

2. Contemplation

This is where you have come up with or been exposed to a new idea, concept, challenge or information that makes you think differently. You're starting to contemplate what life would look like if you made certain changes. Contemplation requires a change in thinking but no change at a subconscious or behavioural level.

3. Preparation

This is where you start to consider what may need to change. This step requires an increase in mental stimulation as you come up with plans to move forward. Most people mistake this stage as action. Planning is not action. Action is when you're doing the things in the plan. There is only so much you can anticipate when you are about to step into the unknown. Plans need to be flexible and adaptable.

4. Decision

The fourth stage is a subtle and often overlooked step, it's the decision to act on your plan and take the first step. A firm decision backed with a desire for the results the change will bring creates a powerful chain reaction both internally and externally however, a decision made without discipline can often lead to procrastination.

5. Action

Taking the first step of your plan. Some people continually bounce around between pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, deciding and then feeling stuck. They can't seem to act on their plans. With knowledge of how your mind and body respond to uncertainty and how to reprogram the subconscious, you can deliberately and courageously make your move.

6. Maintain

Once you've taken action and begin noticing shifts in your results, the next challenge is to master the new you and maintain your progress. The final step in the process of change is maintenance. This is where you continue taking action, adapting and iterating as needed. Your new behaviours, beliefs, perceptions and attitude need to become so ingrained, familiar and normal to you that you no longer fear what was once the unknown.

MAKE YOUR MOVE

Here are three simple questions you can ask yourself to prevent analysis paralysis and guide your decision making.

- **Will it help and support my vision/goals?**
- **Is it consistent and true with my inner compass?**
- **Will the outcome likely be simple and elegant?**

“Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all.”

- Helen Keller

In the context of your goal, which stage of change do you identify with the most right now and what will you commit to doing in the next week to progress to the next stage?

FEAR

“Fear is like a dot that emerges in the space in front of us and captures our attention. It is like a doorway we could go through, but where that doorway leads is not predetermined. It is up to us”

- Pema Chödrön

There are two types of fear. Appropriate Fear and Inappropriate fear.

Appropriate fear: The fear you feel in a life threatening situation. This type of fear is 100% appropriate and what your stress response is designed for. To keep you alive.

Inappropriate fear: Fear of the things that do not threaten your existence. You would feel inappropriate fear when you are afraid to go after your goals, to try something new or do something that goes against the social norm. This type of fear is usually driven by not wanting to look stupid, stand out or fail.

Fear and growth go hand in hand. When you courageously face the thing you fear, you automatically experience growth.

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“I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.”

- Nelson Mandela

TURN FEAR INTO TRIUMPH

The moment you imagine yourself experiencing something different, especially working towards a goal or any type of change, feelings of anxiety and fear will emerge and thoughts of uncertainty, doubt and worry will speed straight into your mind. Although these thoughts and feelings are forms of inappropriate fear, it is perfectly natural and a sign that your fear response and immunity to change are working. Your aim is to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate fear. You can do this by isolating the thoughts and feelings that hold you back and taking action to quieten or disprove them.

Isolate your inappropriate fears by finishing the following sentences.

(NOTE: the aim is to write the first thing that comes to mind. If nothing comes to mind, simply move on to the next sentence, you do not have to complete them all)

When I think about my goal I am afraid of...

My goal makes me feel nervous because...

I am afraid of taking the first step because...

If I achieve my goal I am worried that...

I feel anxious about my goal when...

When it comes to taking action towards the things I want in life, I always avoid...

When I share my hopes and dreams with other people I worry that...

The thing that challenges me the most about my goal is...

I really want to move forward but I lack the strength to...

I know I am settling for less when...

I feel at my weakest when...

When I am honest with myself, I am really afraid that...

TURN FEAR INTO TRIUMPH

You can turn inappropriate fear into triumph through intelligent action. When you pay close attention to feelings of anxiety or analyse your thoughts of uncertainty and doubt, you will quickly realise they have no foundation. You have created them through the stories you tell yourself, projecting yourself into a future that doesn't exist and feeling anxious about it today. Because you created the story you have the power to rewrite it and prevent fear from stopping your progress and growth.

Give yourself permission to accept that the worst that can happen as you move towards your goal is rarely very bad and the best that can happen has the potential to be incredible.

Select the sentence in the previous exercise that you know will have the greatest positive impact in your life were you to overcome it.

The sentence (Inappropriate Fear) I'm choosing to work on today is...

What are you afraid of? Why does this feel so scary? What is the worst possible outcome of this happening?

TURN FEAR INTO TRIUMPH

List the benefits of overcoming the fear and turning your anxiety, nervousness, uncertainty or fear into triumph.

What could be a potential favourable outcome IF the outcome of this fear did unfold?

(Think about the ways you would grow, what you could learn, what characteristics you could rely on to help you through it)

TURN FEAR INTO TRIUMPH

The intelligent actions I am committed to taking to turn this anxiety, nervousness, uncertainty or fear into triumph are...

In the future, when you notice anxiety, nervousness, uncertainty or fear emerging within you, how will you move through it? What tools will you use to reduce the feelings before they become debilitating fear?

VUCA CONDITIONS

“Do not get attached to the world as it is because the world is changing, something new is coming. Every 10 years a big hand comes down and sweeps the dishes off the table.”

- Jerry Weintraub

In the business world the constant shifting landscape is often referred to as VUCA conditions. The meaning and relevance of VUCA often relates to how people view the conditions under which they make decisions, plan, manage risks, create change and solve problems.

When you understand the cycle and stages of change, VUCA can become a practical tool to increase your mental complexity and self-awareness, it can guide your decision making, planning activities, evolution and help you create appropriate interventions to effectively self-author your life.

V = Volatility: Liable to change rapidly and unpredictably, especially for the worse.

U = Uncertainty: A lack of predictability, awareness and the understanding of issues and events, it also includes the potential for surprise.

C = Complexity: The state or quality of a situation being intricate or complicated, this can include the confusion that surrounds life.

A = Ambiguity: The haziness of reality, the potential for misreads, and the mixed meanings of conditions; it can also relate to the confusion surrounding cause-and-effect, multiple interpretations and different perceptions.

Each element of VUCA can be used independently or together to help you navigate the unknown future.

How will your understanding of VUCA serve you as you move towards your goal?

“You will inevitably encounter adversity in life, either on a personal level or, on a collective level. If you haven't delved deep enough, if you haven't found anything beyond the conceptual thinking mind, then adversity, whatever it is, will devastate you. Fear will consume you.

If you knew who and what you are, you will realize that there is nothing to fear.

Only if you don't know yourself does fear arise.

Be aware of yourself, not the conceptual self, not your personal history, but become aware of yourself as conscious presence.

Go deeper than thinking and stay fully awake and present, without mental activity. Find that unshakable foundation that is within you, within everyone.

Adversity is a wonderful opportunity because it forces you to dig deep.

This is an invitation to awaken who you are, because if you don't, you will suffer unnecessarily. This is an opportunity to wake up. It is an opportunity to realize that you are much deeper than what you have known before.

You should pay more attention to your own conscience than to the newscasts and whatever you hear and see.

Humans do not wake up in their comfort zone, they wake up when they are taken out of their comfort zone, when they can no longer bear suffering or unhappiness.

Feel the vitality, become aware of that presence that is inseparable from who you are. That is an incredible accomplishment! There is more to you than the person! That presence is deeper than the person. You need adversity to find it or to deepen fulfilment. There is a saying that goes:

'When the ego cries over what it has lost, the spirit rejoices over what it has found.'

This is a time of great opportunity.

Use it. Do not waste it. Don't get lost in the mind. Don't get lost in fear.”

- Eckhart Tolle

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