

Harnessing the Power of Acceptance to Manage Uncertainty and Change during Covid-19 Transitions



KEY POINTS:

- Acceptance improves wellbeing
- You still have control
- Accept more, stress less
- Accept an uncertain future
- You don't have to do it alone

Since COVID-19 arrived and started to dominate our lives and our thinking, the only real certainty we have had, has been UNCERTAINTY itself! Not only has COVID-19 forced us to learn about physical distancing, scanning and wearing facemasks, but in a very short space of time it has diminished other elements of the life we once knew. Constant social media messaging has also not helped in discerning a balanced perspective.

We have transitioned to having vaccines and vaccine passports and boosters. We have been part of enormous changes to what services and events we can access and enjoy and those we can't for periods of time. It's normal to experience some anxiety and hesitation around new ways of working and living.

When life has been based on routines, we can safely predict what's likely or probable and this brings comfort. The idea that all we can be certain of in the present is uncertainty, can be overwhelming and the reality hard to accept. For some people, the idea of normalising whatever happens suggests giving up. However, just because we accept something is changing, it doesn't mean we like it or that we can't

influence the impact of that change. It just means that we recognise it as an external event we can't control at this point – and it's a waste of our time and energy trying to rail against it and have this affect our wellbeing.

Acceptance improves wellbeing

Recent research from King's College London (*The Conversation, April 29, 2020*) produced a picture of a community that had divided into three clear segments under the COVID lockdown. The accepting, the suffering and the resisting all had different outcomes to their wellbeing depending on their primary attitude.

Not surprisingly, the accepting emerged with greater wellbeing overall, indicating minimal anxiety and depression, better sleep and less alcohol and drug use than both the sufferers and the resisters!

You Still Have CONTROL

While external events like the current pandemic have changed the way we live, it's still in our power to focus on what we CAN control rather than pushing up against walls where we have no influence. So, ok, you may not be able to throw a big birthday party bash at home, you're still worried about the security of your job – actually let's make that the economy – and you're really fed up with incessant COVID updates! That's a lot of bones to be chewing when you could be doing things that give you pleasure or build you up instead.

Changing outside events (that includes trying to read the future) is impossible. At best, you may only be able to influence them, but usually only in a minor way.

You have no control over the economy and can only do your best at your job, your relationships and your other passions. Feeling more positive already? That's one of the benefits of letting go and shifting your focus and energy away from things beyond your control, to things you CAN control or influence.

Accept More, Stress Less

Acceptance can increase positive feelings because it alters the shape and meaning of things that we find stressful and makes them more tolerable.

By playing the cards we have, not the ones we wish we had, we can be more open to the present moment. Today, many people frame this as being more mindful. Letting go of trying to control everything allows room for you to take a breath and experience the joy of the present moment, whether it's baking a cake, hugging your child, calling a lifelong friend or learning something new.

Grow your wellbeing by practicing the 5 Ways to Wellbeing

Five Ways to Wellbeing



Acceptance releases you from things like judging and criticising yourself and others. As well as making you a more pleasant person to be around, it can help you shed a lot of unnecessary baggage and 'what ifs' that weigh you down.

Accepting an Uncertain Future

If you're nervous about life under a 'new normal', you're not alone. We all need to manage our emotions and be pragmatic about controlling what's in our domain or span of control. This may mean making choices about the media and social media we take account of.

Establish your priorities

It's a great time to take stock of how you're spending your time, money and energy. Eliminate things that you don't want to do anymore. Add more activities that

are in line with your priorities moving forward. You'll find yourself flourishing, rather than languishing.

Create a plan to manage your health

Whether you want to eat a healthier diet to keep your immune system in top shape, or you want to exercise more after spending all those weeks indoors, taking charge of your health can help you feel more in control, of your future.

Look for alternative streams of income

COVID has upended many previously stable jobs that now seem less secure. Creating several streams of income could help you feel more confident about your financial security in the future. You might launch a new venture or take the time to assess the strategies you can use to increase your longer-term financial stability.

Practice healthy coping skills

There are many problems you can't solve right now. We are all coming to terms with that. However, we CAN all address how we feel about our problems and how we approach them. Look for strategies to manage your emotions. Practice yoga. Meditate, connect with friends or whānau when you're feeling unsettled or anxious. Do what you know works for you and has served you well in the past.

You Don't Have to Do it Alone

George Orwell said, "**Happiness only exists in acceptance**". Simple, but powerful if we can embrace the power of acceptance and gratitude for the present moment we live in. We know it can be tough. If you can't see past the struggle and connect with the positive, you may need some extra support to help you through this time.

Remember Vitae's free call number **0508 664 981** and we're here 24/7 if you need some extra help.