

Supporting Well-Being: Six Tips Anyone Can Use During Times of Uncertainty



A CSCH Tip Sheet by Jessica B. Koslouski, Ph.D.



1. Start the day with structure, move through it with flexibility. Structure & routine can bring feelings of comfort and control in times of uncertainty. However, you might not have the energy to stay on track, or more pressing responsibilities may arise. Create structure to the extent that it supports you but offer yourself (and others) grace and flexibility when things don't go to plan.

2. Communicate your needs. During times of uncertainty, we often experience a range of emotions and feel more drained than usual. Try to be explicit about your feelings, energy level, and stress tolerance with those around you. Dr. Brené Brown suggests that statements such as "I'm at 30% right now" communicate a lot to those who care about you.



3. Incorporate short breaks into your day. Screen time and increased stress affect our ability to focus and stay regulated. Dr. Bruce Perry explains that a few minutes of intentional breathing or walking can restore regulation. The positive effect will fade with time, so take multiple short breaks throughout your day. A change of scenery, stretching, and laughter can all help.

4. Reach out to others. Supportive relationships are our best protection against stress. Text or call those you frequently rely on – or reach out to others you've lost touch with. If the uncertainty is feeling unbearable, mental health support may be beneficial. Psychology Today can help you connect with a local provider who fits your needs (e.g., specialty area, language).



5. Help others. When a lot is out of our control, small acts of kindness can give us a sense of purpose and lift our spirits. Call a friend or neighbor to check in, send a note to someone you appreciate, or offer to drop off a meal to a friend or family member. Focusing on others can boost our own mood and prevent despair and isolation.

6. Practice physical self-care. Do your best to stay on a schedule with sleep, meals, hydration, and movement. When you're experiencing uncertainty, expect that you might need more time to rest and recharge. Repetitive and rhythmic activities (e.g., walking, singing, deep breathing) can help regulate our sensory systems.



Remember to go easy on yourself. Strive for small changes, as these can have a big impact on our ability to cope with uncertainty. Start by choosing one strategy to try in your own way over the next week. Then, assess how it's going – over time, you might make changes or add additional strategies.