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Slide 1




# Coping During Uncertain Times

Presentation by:  
MHN Training & Development

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## **Participant Handbook**

## Slide 2




### Learning Objectives

- Discuss the challenges of and common reactions to uncertainty
- Recognize how perceived control impacts responses to uncertainty
- Present options for managing stress during uncertain times
- Describe different ways to increase resilience during uncertainty

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2

## Slide 3




### Sources of Uncertainty

- National/global economic turbulence
- National/global events
- Industry decline or failures
- Organizational restructuring
- Potential job loss
- Poor job market
- Health issues
  
- What else?

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3

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### Reactions to Uncertainty

- Typical reactions to uncertainty may include:
  - Fear
  - Stress
  - Anxiety
  - What else?
- Consider healthy ways to cope:
  - Focus on factors within your control
  - Acknowledge and attend to feelings about loss
  - Maintain proactive behaviors and healthy habits
  - Look for ways to increase your personal resilience

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4

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### Controlling What You Can

- Factors beyond our control
  - Organizational/company changes
  - Local, state, national, and global economic issues
  - Stock market volatility
  - Housing value trends
  - Changes in government & industry
- Factors within our control
  - Your self care
  - Your spending habits/budgeting/debt management
  - Your financial planning
  - Your skills and professional development
  - Your responses in relationships
  - Your emotional and mental responses to events and circumstances

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5

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### Perceived Stress and Locus of Control

- Focus your thoughts, energy and actions on situations and events that you can control
- Reduce your focus, thoughts, energy and actions on situations and events that you cannot control
- What happens when you focus too much on events and situations that you cannot control?
  - Risk of becoming a victim to external situations, people and factors
  - Feelings of cynicism, helplessness and resentment may prevail
  - *What else?*

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### Focusing on Factors within Your Control

What are some actions that you can take to *regain* a sense of control?

- Identify or revisit your core values
  - Make sure your time and attention are aligned with what is important in your life
- Engage in effective personal time management
  - Create a time management system that works for you and relevant others in your life
  - Plan for, schedule, and act on what is important to you
  - Revisit what works/what doesn't with your process
- Be aware of thinking patterns and self-talk that may contribute to a sense of helplessness and/or victimization
  - Realize that you always have a choice
  - Review your options and chose what is best for you
  - Redirect your thoughts and self-talk to be more positive and to focus on what you CAN control
- *What else?*

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## Why is Uncertainty and Change Challenging?

It May Require You To:

- Readjust Your Behavior
- Rethink Your Thinking
- Redefine Your Feelings
- Reevaluate Values & Goals

- Areas of Life Uncertainty
  - Loss
  - Separation
  - Relocation
  - Change in a Relationship
  - Change in a Job/Career
  - Change in Health

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## Uncertainty & Change Involve Loss

- Recognize the losses that you may be experiencing because of the uncertainty
- Be aware of any symptoms of grief that may come up during this time
  - Emotional Symptoms
    - Shock and disbelief
    - Sadness
    - Guilt
    - Anger
    - Fear
  - Physical Symptoms
    - Fatigue
    - Nausea
    - Lowered immunity
    - Weight loss or weight gain
    - Aches and pains
    - Insomnia
- Give yourself time and space to process any grief and loss that you may be experiencing

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### What Are Common Reactions? Grief & Loss

The diagram, titled "5 Stages of Grief", illustrates the interconnected nature of the five stages of grief. The stages are arranged in a circle: Denial & Isolation (top), Anger (top-right), Depression (bottom-right), Bargaining (bottom), and Acceptance (left). Colored arrows indicate the flow between stages: a yellow arrow from Denial & Isolation to Anger, a green arrow from Anger to Depression, a blue arrow from Depression to Bargaining, a red arrow from Bargaining to Acceptance, and a yellow arrow from Acceptance back to Denial & Isolation. Additionally, white arrows show that each stage can lead to any other stage, representing the non-linear and individual nature of the grief process. The source "PsychCentral.com" is noted at the bottom right of the diagram.

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### Creating a Personal Action Plan During Uncertainty

1. Recognize and understand the stressors
2. Identify your opportunities and strengths
3. Choose your action
4. Review your progress and make adjustments

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### Managing Your Responses During Uncertain Times

- Pause but don't panic
- Identify your stressors and make a plan to address
- Limit your exposure to the daily news
- Recognize how you deal with stress related to current events and situations
- Turn these challenging times into opportunities for real growth and change
- Express gratitude
- Be compassionate with yourself and others
- Reach out for support
  - Social network
  - Financial
  - Spiritual
  - Professional

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### Talking to Children About Events and Issues

- Keep discussions age-appropriate
- Frame issues as temporary and manageable
- Do not “pretend” everything is fine
- Let the children feel helpful to the family situation
- Find books/stories about other people's struggles
- Discover cost-savings creative entertainment
- Do things that are important as a family
- Welcome questions

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Slide 14

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## Building Resilience to Uncertainty

- Enhance your Resiliency Attitudes
  - Control what you can, let go of what you can't
  - Change as a positive challenge
  - Commitment to your core values
- Enhance your Resiliency Skills
  - Transformational coping by turning “negative” events into opportunities to grow and learn
  - Social support networking
  - Continuous learning and improvement in both your professional and personal lives

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Slide 15

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## Proactive Behaviors to Cope with Uncertainty

- Identify your core values
  - Commit your time and energy to those core values
  - Ensure that your actions align with your core values
- Maintain a consistent schedule (as much as possible)
- Maintain effective work-life balance
- Practice good personal time management
  - Schedule important family activities
  - Schedule time for exercise, hobbies and self-care
- Be proactive and assertive about expressing your needs
- Stay organized
- Vent in emotionally healthy ways
- Use humor appropriately

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Slide 16

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### Healthy Lifestyle Habits

- Enhance your healthy diet
- Stop smoking
- Reduce alcohol consumption
- Increase your level of exercise
- Protect your sleep
- Pursue healthy leisure activities
- Engage in active relaxation
- *What else?*

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16

Slide 17

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### Uncertainty = Opportunity

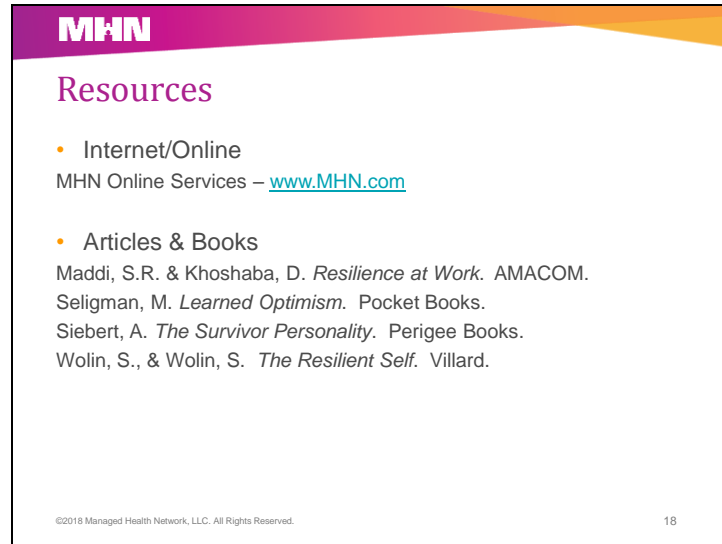
“The truth is that our finest moments are most likely to occur when we are feeling deeply uncomfortable, unhappy, or unfulfilled. For it is only in such moments, propelled by our discomfort, that we are likely to step out of our ruts and start searching for different ways or truer answers.”

*by M. Scott Peck, M.D.*  
(1936-2005) Psychiatrist & Author

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17

Slide 18



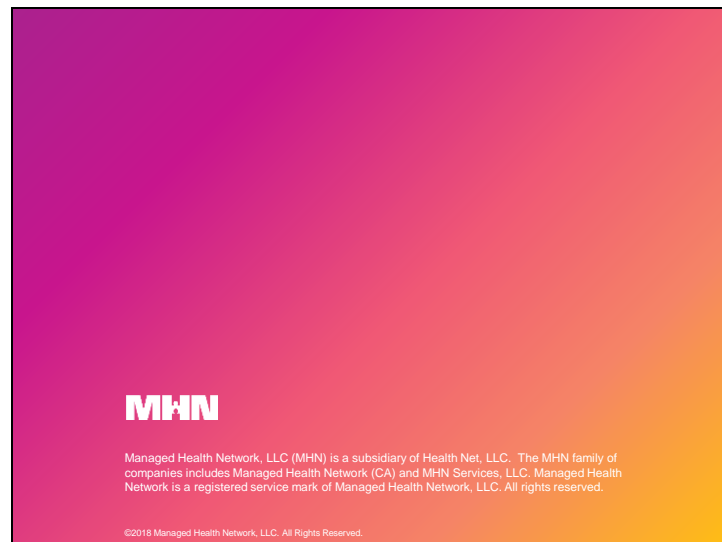
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## Resources

- Internet/Online  
MHN Online Services – [www.MHN.com](http://www.MHN.com)
- Articles & Books  
Maddi, S.R. & Khoshaba, D. *Resilience at Work*. AMACOM.  
Seligman, M. *Learned Optimism*. Pocket Books.  
Siebert, A. *The Survivor Personality*. Perigee Books.  
Wolin, S., & Wolin, S. *The Resilient Self*. Villard.

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Slide 19



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# Handout A. The 5 Stages of Grief

## 1. Denial & Isolation

The first reaction to learning about the terminal illness, loss, or death of a cherished loved one is to deny the reality of the situation. "This isn't happening". It is a normal reaction to rationalize our overwhelming emotions, and a [common defense mechanism](#) that buffers the immediate shock of the loss, numbing us to our emotions. We block out the words and hide from the facts. We start to believe that life is meaningless, and nothing is of any value any longer. For most people, this stage is a temporary response that carries us through the first wave of pain.

## 2. Anger

As denial and isolation begin to wear, reality and its pain re-emerge. We are not ready. The intense emotion is deflected from our vulnerable core, redirected and expressed instead as anger. The anger may be aimed at inanimate objects, complete strangers, friends or family.

## 3. Bargaining

This stage is more common in a person who has experienced a death in the family, and typically follows a stage of anger. Bargaining almost always involves a conversation, connection, or a wish to a higher power for help of to take away their loss. This may include a God or other higher power of a paranormal sort. This is when a patient's religion may play a role in the way that a person mourns a loss. This may either speed up or slow down the mourning process.

## 4. Depression

It is most important to understand the difference between normal sadness and clinical depression. People may get to the depression stage earlier or later than expected, but this is not abnormal, as some would think. "Everyone grieves in their own way" (Kubler-Ross, Elisabeth) "Depression is a normal part of the grieving process". Emotions like emptiness, isolation, helplessness, and extreme sadness are common during this stage.

## 5. Acceptance

Acceptance is the final stage in the process of grieving a loss. Everyone going through this process is headed for this destination sooner or later. This is the place everyone strives to reach. "For the dying individual, this is the stage at which one attempts things for what they are, makes peace with the world, and makes the relationships with the deceased dignified. They accept the situation, and go on with their life, accepts the loss as a part of life, although it will be in a different way" (Kubler-Ross).

### Adapted from:

- <https://psychcentral.com/lib/the-5-stages-of-loss-and-grief/>
- <http://todaypsychology.weebly.com/the-5-stages-of-dying.html>

## Handout B. Action Planning During Uncertainty and Change

**1. Recognize and Understand the Change:** Learn everything you can about the change.

Ask yourself questions such as:

- What information do I need to get to evaluate the change?
- What's the worse thing that can happen?
- What do I stand to lose because of this change?
- How is this change affecting me now?
- Who or what is in control of the effects of this change now?
- Is there a way to minimize the negative effects of the change?
- What result do I want to avoid?
- What result do I want to create?
- What do I value and what are my goals?
- What talents and abilities do I possess to help me deal with the change?

**2. Identify your opportunities:**

- What are my possibilities and opportunities for growing? for learning? for becoming wiser? stronger? healthier? more loving? more productive?
- What benefits or gains are hidden in this call to change?

**3. Choose your action:** Review your possibilities and then ask, "What is the most important thing for me to do next?"

- What action can I take today?
- What action can I take tomorrow?
- What actions should wait until a later date?
- Which choices best match my values and goals, and best utilize my talents and abilities?

Write down the action steps you are going to take.

**4. Review your progress and make adjustments:** Review everything you are doing in dealing with the change.

- Am I doing the right thing about this right now?
- Which strategies are working and which ones are not?
- Is there something else I should be doing?

## Handout C. How Stress Hardy Are You? Resilience Questionnaire

Write down how much you agree or disagree with the following statements using this scale:

0 = Strongly Disagree

1 = Mildly Disagree

2 = Mildly Agree

3 = Strongly Agree

\_\_\_A. Trying my best at work makes a difference.

\_\_\_B. Trusting to fate is sometimes all I can do in a relationship.

\_\_\_C. I often wake up eager to start on the day's projects.

\_\_\_D. Thinking of myself as a free person leads to great frustration and difficulty.

\_\_\_E. I would be willing to sacrifice financial security in my work if something really challenging came along.

\_\_\_F. It bothers me if I have to deviate from the routine or schedule I've set for myself.

\_\_\_G. An average citizen can have an impact on politics.

\_\_\_H. Without the right breaks, it is hard to be successful in my field.

\_\_\_I. I know why I am doing what I am doing.

\_\_\_J. Getting close to people puts me at risk of being obliterated by them.

\_\_\_K. Encountering new situations is an important priority in my life.

\_\_\_L. I really don't mind it when I have nothing to do.

**To Score Yourself:** The questions above measure control, commitment, and challenge. For half the questions, a high score (like "3=Strongly Agree") indicates hardiness; for the other half, a low score (disagreement) does.

First, you will calculate your scores on control, commitment, and challenge. Then, you will add those scores together to get a score for total hardiness. See the scoring instructions on the next page.

## How Hardy Are You -- Scoring

- To calculate your scores on control, commitment, and challenge, write in your answers above the letter of each question. Then add and subtract as indicated.

<u>Column 1</u>	<u>Column 2</u>	<u>Column 1 minus Column 2</u>
$\frac{\quad}{A} + \frac{\quad}{G} = \underline{\quad}$	$\frac{\quad}{B} + \frac{\quad}{H} = \underline{\quad}$	$= \underline{\quad}$ CONTROL
$\frac{\quad}{C} + \frac{\quad}{I} = \underline{\quad}$	$\frac{\quad}{D} + \frac{\quad}{J} = \underline{\quad}$	$= \underline{\quad}$ COMMITMENT
$\frac{\quad}{E} + \frac{\quad}{K} = \underline{\quad}$	$\frac{\quad}{F} + \frac{\quad}{L} = \underline{\quad}$	$= \underline{\quad}$ CHALLENGE

- Add your scores for control, commitment, and challenge together to obtain a score for total hardiness.

$$\frac{\quad}{\text{Control}} + \frac{\quad}{\text{Commitment}} + \frac{\quad}{\text{Challenge}} = \underline{\quad} \text{ Hardiness Score}$$

### 3. Score Interpretation:

10 to 18 points: A Stress Hardy personality

0 to 9 points: Moderate hardiness

Less than 0 points (a negative score): Low hardiness