

Dealing with the Immense Uncertainty of the World

The world is in a state of fear and uncertainty right now, and it's stressful and overwhelming for most of us.

This kind of fear, stress, uncertain and overwhelm can have some really strong effects on our lives:

- Constant fear and stress can cause anxiety problems, worsening sleep and health, depression and anxiety
- In a place of fear, we can often make bad decisions
- People can panic, overreact because of fear, and cause widespread confusion and disruptions
- Our relationships can deteriorate when we're operating from a place of fear
- We become less productive, less focused, when we're stressed
- It has an obvious impact on our happiness, including the impacts from all of the above

These are just some of the strong effects from a constant sense of fear, uncertainty, stress and overwhelm.

So how do we cope with this?

Obviously, there's no easy answer. Let's talk about what I've found to work, and what I recommend right now.

Dealing with the Uncertainty & Fear

The first thing is just to acknowledge that we're feeling a lot of uncertainty and stress about the world situation. Bring awareness to the feelings you're experiencing, and acknowledge their presence.

Often we want to ignore the feelings, or we're just operating on autopilot and not really aware of it. But then we're operating from that place of fear and stress, and these emotions are driving us without us being aware of it.

Next, see if you can give the fear and uncertainty some space. That means to turn your attention toward it, and let it be in your awareness ... but with a sense of spaciousness, as if you're giving it a wide open room to *just be*. You don't need the feelings to go away or change, they are just going to be in your awareness with a feeling of having space around them, letting them exist as if you could even welcome them.

This is a way of taking care of yourself. When we're feeling fear, it's important to nurture

ourselves, take care of the feeling. Give it space, and allow it to be in your awareness.

Third, see this as an opportunity to practice. We often close ourselves off to fear and uncertainty, but they can be really powerful things to practice with. They are incredible teachers! Let yourself pause for a few moments to practice with this, because uncertainty and fear and stress will always be a part of your life – you won't ever be free of them! They show up whether you want them or not, so why not get good at being with them?

This is an opportunity to practice mindfulness with your fear and uncertainty. Open to the opportunity, instead of turning away to distraction and busyness.

Fourth, practice welcoming it and giving it unconditional friendliness. This might sound strange when it comes to fear, because for so long we've had an adversarial relationship to fear and uncertainty. We don't like them, because they feel like stress and pain. But we don't have to relate to fear this way. We can be more open toward it, even friendly.

So start by trying to welcome it. Allow it into your experience. Even be warm towards it, as you might welcome a good friend.

Then try to give it some unconditional friendliness. It's an amazing practice. See if you're able to bring the kind of warmth and friendliness towards it that you do with a loved one. You don't need the feeling to be any certain way, you can be friendly with it no matter what.

Fifth, let yourself feel the openness of the moment. This one is a little harder to explain, but bear with me. If you can relax and open your awareness wider than the narrowness of your thought patterns or narrative ... you can experience the openness of this moment.

Let your awareness open wider than your body. Let it take in the room all around you — light, colors, shapes, sound, textures, sensations on your skin. Feel the relaxed, open nature of the moment — fluid, changing, not fixed, unknowable, dynamic, spacious. This is the nature of our world, the root of uncertainty. It's actually beautiful to behold. Let yourself relax into this openness.

That can take practice, don't worry if you don't feel it right away. Keep practicing with it!

Sixth, open to feeling connected to others through your uncertainty and fear. As you sit in stillness, as you feel the sensations in your body, as you welcome the feelings and practice friendliness with them, as you experience the openness of the moment ... you can also feel a connection to others.

Think about everyone else in the world who is experiencing similar feelings of discomfort and uncertainty. Similar levels of stress, fear, overwhelm, anxiety. You are not alone — so many others feel it right now! In this way, you are all connected. Let your heart feel this connection to others going through similar experiences. Send them compassion and love, wishing them well.

In this way, our fear and uncertainty, in these very uncertain times ... become an opening for connection and compassion. This is transformative. Try it right now.

The world is in a state of intense mass uncertainty. Don't shut yourself off to it, ignore it or try to control, distract or exit.

Open yourself to this, because it is a powerful time to practice.

Learn More with Me

If you'd like to practice with me, there are two offerings this Saturday (March 14) and one ongoing program where you can join me:

1. **Zen Dharma talk on Fearlessness with Susan O'Connell (and Leo) on Saturday:** I'm joining my Zen teacher Susan in giving a free dharma talk on the idea of fear and practicing fearlessness. It'll be my first dharma talk ever! It's tomorrow — Saturday (March 14) at 10am Pacific / 1pm Eastern. [Watch online here.](#)
2. **Fearless Purpose Online Workshop (Saturday):** A couple hours later, Susan and I will be conducting a 3-hour workshop called Fearless Purpose. The in-person event has been canceled, but you can still participate online. We're still holding this workshop because we believe it's so important right now. It will be from 1-4 pm Pacific / 4-7 pm Eastern. You can still sign up for online participation [here.](#)
3. **Fearless Training Program:** I also offer an ongoing program called Fearless Training, where we train with uncertainty in the mindfulness methods I talk about in this article. I invite you to join us and train together! Check out Fearless Training [here.](#)