



Tuning In While Staying In continued

- Misplaced anger: Getting irritated or angrier than normal at people and things that would not normally make you upset. This may be driven by underlying thoughts like, “I can’t stand this!” and “When will this end!” as well as grief over the things that we are missing in this time.
- Difficulty focusing: As your brain tries to make sense of this transition, integrate all the information, and continue to move forward on a daily basis with the tasks at hand, you may find it more challenging to stay focused.
- Worry thoughts: “What will happen next?” “What should I do to prepare?” “How can I stay sane right now?”
- Antsy-ness: You maybe be noticing a sense of urgency in your body and mind to DO SOMETHING! You may have even taken action on those urges!
- Lethargy: A lack of energy to do much. This may be related to grief as well as the energy it takes to change and integrate new information. This needs to be honored. (Note: If you have a history of depression, you may need to be more careful about balancing rest and action. Depression calls us to “curl up in bed.”)

It is in our nature to avoid these uncomfortable feelings. However, it is when we step out of our comfort zone and practice being with the uncomfortable that the magic happens. Your patients will be doing this every time they are vulnerable and reveal themselves to you. This is good practice for being with discomfort.

Here are some ideas for how to be with the uncomfortable feelings that may be arising at this stage:

1. Remember that it is normal to feel antsy. Our brains are wired for novelty. This drive is what helped us survive by keeping us curious and creative. If we were ok with things always being the same, we would probably still live in caves, if we were living at all! You might say to yourself, “I’m feeling agitated. This is normal. Let me feel this.” You may be surprised how simply naming the feeling can, in time, help to soften it.
2. Get curious about you, including your capacity for tolerating difficult emotions. What are my habits? What do I typically do when I feel that little anxiety bubble creeping in? Do I pick up my phone? Do I eat? Could I sit with this feeling a little longer? A practice for this is what we call “the pause.” When you notice the body sensation, thought, or feeling of discomfort, see if you can pause for a moment before doing the habitual reaction. You might discover that you have

more capacity for being with uncomfortable feelings than you thought. This builds trust that we can handle difficult things and reminds us that we actually are resilient. This insight is huge!! Uncomfortable experiences are going to keep happening (sorry!), and it's good to know we can handle them.

3. Envision your future: Take a few minutes each day to reflect – and journal, if you can – about what you want for your future:

- a. What am I doing now that I have not been able to do before?
- b. Who do I want to be on the other side?
- c. How do I want my days to look?
- d. What do I want to bring to my life? to the world?
- e. What am I learning about myself now that I want to bring forward? What internal resources are showing up?

By spending some time listening to the quieter stirrings of our soul rather than reacting out of habit, we might discover some amazing things about ourselves, our relationships, and our deeper yearnings for the lives we want to create.

The possibility for transformation is right here, if we are willing to shift out of the busy-ness of “doing” and practice being with -- marinating in -- the uncomfortable experience of liminal time.

Paige Bentley, Ph.D, LCMHCS
Bentley Therapy, PLLC