

Coping in Times of Political Uncertainty



Major political change brings with it uncertainty about the present and the future. This article provides information on ways to cope with feelings of worry and stress you may be experiencing during times of political uncertainty or unrest.

How you may feel

National events affect everyday citizens in many ways. This is especially true of major changes that may bring along excitement for some but also may be accompanied by feelings of:

- uncertainty
- insecurity
- loss of control
- worry
- anxiety
- concern about the future

You may be concerned about everything from your finances and economic future as well as the state of the nation, particularly if civil unrest—or the threat of it—is present.

How the changes may affect you

Economic worry. Experts agree that major political change is sure to affect business, savings, taxes, investments, and real estate values. Until the dust settles, it is uncertain what the change will mean for the economy. However, financial experts caution against making big financial decisions regarding your own personal savings and investments at this time. For example, resist the temptation to pull your retirement savings out of the market due to feelings of panic or fear. Retirement accounts are meant to be long-term investments for your future.

Concern about your job. If you have concerns about your job, the best source of information is management within your own organisation. Your first question might be one you pose to your manager. It might be as simple as, "What do these political events mean for our business and my day-to-day work?"

Divided interpersonal relationships. A political change can cause division within a country and also impact personal relationships. We sometimes find ourselves on opposite sides of hard-fought political battles. This can cause strain and conflict among friends, relatives, co-workers, or neighbours, not to mention strangers. It is best to steer clear of conversations about politics in professional settings, for example at work or with colleagues. It is also best to avoid discussing recent political events if this adds to your own feelings of worry or stress.

Fear about national security. In the wake of a major political change, you may have fears or worries about national or international security.

Managing fear and anxiety

Major political change can leave us feeling anxious or worried about things over which we have little control. Here are some ways to effectively manage these feelings:

Stay informed. Rely on credible and trustworthy sources of information for news updates, guidance, and advice.

Avoid the rumor mill.

Take a break from social media. During times of political, social, and cultural change, social media is full of people posting opinions, articles, conspiracies, petitions, disagreements, and misinformation. Avoiding social media gives you space to process your own thoughts and feelings without being influenced by others.

Be aware that there may be public demonstrations. These can escalate quickly, so stay away. It is also a good idea to enter emergency numbers on your phone in case you do get caught up in a situation where need to call for help fast.

Strive for unity, compassion, and kindness. Unfortunately, during times of uncertainty, reports of hate crimes and verbal abuse are not uncommon. The more compassion and understanding you are able to exhibit toward others—friends and strangers alike—the less tension-filled the world will be.

Do the things you would normally do during difficult times to manage feelings of stress and anxiety. Make a point of eating well-balanced meals. Limit or avoid alcohol and caffeine. Drink plenty of water—stress can sometimes lead to dehydration. Make regular physical activity a priority. Regular exercise is one of the best ways to reduce stress and improve your mood.

Take breaks. Go for a walk. Get some fresh air. Practise deep breathing or meditation.

Connect with friends and family. You'll probably find that other people are just as worried as you are about the same or similar things. Talking things over helps relieve stress.

Reduce other stress in your life. Try to avoid making big life changes during times of uncertainty.

Seek professional help

Many professionals are available to offer help during stressful times, including psychologists, social workers, financial counsellors, and more. Contact your organisation's assistance programme for additional help or support. If you are not sure how to contact the programme, your HR representative or your manager can give you the contact information.