



Relationship with Uncertainty

By Lyn Carman

Our relationship with uncertainty

"Promise me you'll always remember: You're braver than you believe, and stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think."

One of my all-time favourite quotes, and while it doesn't directly mention uncertainty, it speaks to the underlying theme of facing challenges with courage and confidence, even when the outcome is uncertain. Winnie the Pooh's wisdom reminds us to trust in our own abilities, even when we're unsure of what the future holds.

Uncertainty can be defined as a state of ambiguity or lack of certainty about a particular situation, outcome, or future event. In the world of oral health professionals, uncertainty often lurks as an ever-present companion, posing both challenges and opportunities for professionals in their workplace and personal lives.

Uncertainty is like the starting point for growth—it's necessary for life. Growth flourishes in uncertain situations. But often, we see uncertainty as scary and forget its power to help us grow. What if we could change how we see uncertainty?

Uncertainty often leads us outside of our comfort zone into new and unknown territories. It can feel insecure, unsafe and uncomfortable. Sometimes, the fear of what we don't know can stop us from exploring new things outside our comfort zone. It's like staying on the shore because we're afraid of the deep ocean. But if we never take that leap, we might miss out on amazing experiences and discoveries. It's only when we push past our fears that we realise the magic waiting for us beyond our comfort zone.

But what if we reframed uncertainty as an essential part of our journey—a pathway to personal and professional growth? Just as we educate our patients about the importance of oral health, we must also cultivate mental fitness within ourselves to navigate uncertainties with confidence and resilience. Our relationship with uncertainty is a reflection of our mental fitness.

The first step in embracing uncertainty is acknowledging its role as a precursor to growth.

There's a poignant story that beautifully illustrates the transformative power of struggle. It's a story of a child who encounters a butterfly struggling to break free from its cocoon. Recognising the butterfly's struggle, the child wants to help and gently pulls open the cocoon. However, instead of flying away, the butterfly's wings remain weak and unable to support its body. The child soon learns that it was the struggle of pushing through the tiny opening of the cocoon that forced fluid from the butterfly's body into its wings, strengthening them for flight.

This story beautifully demonstrates the idea that struggles and challenges are essential for growth and development. Just as the butterfly needed to struggle out of the cocoon to strengthen its wings, we also need to face difficulties in life to become stronger and more resilient individuals.

In the context of uncertainty, this story reminds us that while it may be tempting to avoid or go around challenges, it is often through facing them head-on that we discover our strength and potential. Embracing uncertainty and navigating through its challenges can ultimately lead to personal growth, resilience, and amazing experiences.

In our professional lives, uncertainty can present itself in the form of new technologies, changing patient expectations, new team members and changing processes. Yet, instead of embracing change, we may find ourselves stuck in old routines, hesitant to take risks and try new approaches. However, it's exactly during these uncertain times that innovation thrives. By having courage to step outside our comfort zones and explore new ideas of dental care, we open ourselves up to exciting opportunities for growth and improvement.

Outside of work, uncertainty affects every part of our lives; relationships, health, and overall well-being. Just as we solve problems at work, we can use our strength to handle life's uncertainties. Whether it's health problems, money issues, or personal struggles, these moments can be tough. But they're also chances for growth. By facing these uncertainties directly, we can learn, grow, and become stronger.

In essence, uncertainty is not something to be feared but embraced as an integral part of our professional and personal journey. By nurturing our mental fitness, which isn't always about maintaining a positive outlook but also about developing resilience and coping strategies, and by staying open to new ideas, we get to strengthen our relationship with uncertainty.

Let's welcome uncertainty as a chance to grow, knowing that it brings opportunities for change and improvement.

