



think²
perform[®]
MAKING THE IDEAL REAL[®]

Preparing for the Certainty of Uncertainty

A guide to dealing with turbulent times

CERTAINTY OF UNCERTAINTY

With the recent pandemic of COVID-19 and the uncertainty it has created, regular life has clearly been disrupted. The foundation of think2perform's philosophy is rooted in preparing for the ever-present truth – the truth of uncertainty. We've spent years developing and deepening our expertise in understanding and dealing with uncertainty. What we know for sure is that uncertainty is something that we can all expect. Certain times it's very clear that we don't know what's around the corner or what will happen next. Without question, we're in one of those times.

As uncertainty and ambiguity increase, so too does our stress. Often times the origins of stress can be categorized – professional or personal. Yet, stress does not compartmentalize; if you're stressed at the office, you're stressed at home and vice versa. Today's circumstances leave us with a tremendous amount of uncertainty both professionally and personally. With the personal risk of the virus for ourselves, our immediate and extended family, and friends coupled with the professional risk in not knowing how it will impact what you do, we can become overwhelmed in all aspects of our life.

The recent increase in remote work has changed the structure and connection not only in how we get our work done, but also in how we interact with our team and clients. Those changes increase uncertainty and create stress resulting in a decreased ability to think clearly, manage our emotions and make great decisions. All of that makes changing our behavior even harder than it is under good circumstances. Our tendency is to revert to what we used to do - the way we used to behave in periods of high stress, high ambiguity and high uncertainty.

In the last several years we've become more involved in research that connects our physical health with our financial health. We know that stress has an impact on both. And we know that if we are stressed financially, it will adversely affect our physical health. The good news is that we also know that being financially prepared for the certainty of uncertainty will most often reduce stress, and, in turn, help us better manage our physical health. How we deal with uncertainty and how we help those that we love and care about do the same is the key to managing stress. When it comes to managing stress, there are things that we can do that can increase the likelihood of responding positively.

THE THREE BUCKET THEORY

The Three Bucket Theory is a tool that helps us adapt to uncertain times. Bucket one are things we can control. We are certain the one thing that we can control is our own behavior. Of course, there are plenty of things we can't control, including what's happening with the unprecedented coronavirus pandemic. The effects of the virus on the market and economy are out of our control. However, we can control our response by focusing our efforts on eating well, getting enough sleep and saving money when we can. Successful people spend their time in bucket one.



1

Things that
we can
control



2

Things that
we can
influence



3

Things that
we neither
control nor
influence

Often when we are stressed, we tend to focus on tasks - let me go to the grocery store, let me get busy and let me keep my mind occupied. We default to the belief that when I'm doing things, I'm coping. Yet we often do so at the expense of relationships leading us to disconnect from others and ourselves.

During periods of high stress, it's critical to focus on taking care of ourselves and those that are most important to us. Pay attention to diet, exercise, rest as they increase our stress capacity; these are the tools that best prepare us for dealing with periods of high stress. If I'm aware of my natural orientation to become more task oriented, and I can

resist that temptation and focus on staying connected while doing a better job of taking care of myself, I am better equipped to more effectively deal with the stress.

Bucket two of the Three Bucket Theory are things we can influence. The better we deal with bucket one, the more influence we have in bucket two. Some of those things we can influence are our children, the people we work with and the behavior of our clients. While we can't control other's behavior, we can influence them by gaining control of our own behavior.

Bucket three of the Three Bucket Theory is everything we can't control. What can't we control? We can't control the weather, the economy, the stock market, and, in the case of COVID-19, how rapidly it spreads or whether or not we contract it. It is easy to experience strong emotions when thinking about bucket three situations. As we mentioned earlier, an increase in uncertainty creates an increase in anxiety and stress. When we focus on bucket three, emotions may seem out of control and we tend to feel immobilized. We begin asking ourselves questions such as "Why is this happening to me?" So, how do we control our focus? The answer is simple, but often not easy - pay attention to yourself in the moment.

THE 4RS

The 4 Rs is a tool that helps us pause and pay attention. The first R is Recognize. We need to recognize our moment to moment experience when it comes to answering three questions: What am I thinking right now? What am I feeling right now? What am I doing, physically, right now? We call these three questions the freeze exercise. As you contemplate these questions, you may begin to notice that you feel anxious, worried or concerned. This is normal, especially in today's circumstances when many of us have had plans that changed; families had their spring breaks canceled or interrupted and schools are closed while businesses have shifted work environments and others are closing. There is a lot of noise surrounding us that we have to deal with and it's affecting our ability to be present. In times of uncertainty, it becomes even more important to frequently practice the freeze exercise to stay present and keep our brains from running away with bucket three questions such as "What will happen tomorrow, next week, and next month?" More than ever, we don't know what tomorrow's going to hold.

Recognize

Reflect

Reframe

Respond

Once we have recognized, we move to the second R - Reflect. Reflecting is about calming down. By reflecting on the bigger picture, your values and what is truly important to you, you begin to think more clearly. You become more in tune with your moment to moment experience and can ensure you are in alignment with what you most care about.

Now that you've recognized and reflected, you can move to the third R - Reframe. Here, as you process more clearly, you use the logical thinking part of my brain, the prefrontal cortex, to ponder alternatives. You may ask yourself, "What would be a better choice? What are the advantages and disadvantage of these options? What are the tradeoffs?" After weighing your options and tradeoffs, you're equipped to make a decision leading to the fourth R - Respond. You're frame of mind is set to respond in a way consistent with your values.

As with everything, practice makes permanent. Practice does not make perfect. Remember, permanent – not perfect. What you repeatedly do and what you repeatedly think gets wired into the habit center of your brain. By continually practicing these tools and focusing your attention on what you can control rather than the uncertainty that is present, you're on your way to adapting to your environment.



Guide to dealing with turbulent times

think²
perform[®]
MAKING THE IDEAL REAL[®]

think2perform.com

612.333.8791

706 2nd ave s, #271

minneapolis, mn 55402