

Preparation for G111 -- Living With Uncertainty

When we feel most concerned about certainty, may we let it be a mindfulness bell, calling us to open to this inner core of who we are. - *from a sermon by the Rev. Mary Grigolia*

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We live in the midst of change -- and the uncertainties that come with change. From the mundane happenings of day-to-day existence -- flat tires, rescheduled meetings, unexpected rain -- to major life events -- birth, death of a loved one, serious health issues -- uncertainty is a constant. And we must deal with it not just in our own individual lives but also in our community, nation and in the world as a whole.

Some uncertainty is of our own choosing. We might, for example, opt not to make hotel reservations before we leave on a trip, preferring the adventure of the unknown. We might adopt a puppy or kitten of unknown parentage from the animal shelter. And, of course, we never know how any new friendship or romantic relationship will develop when we enter it.

Most uncertainty, however, occurs in situations that are partially or wholly out of our control. It can lead to asking questions such as these: Will I lose my job in the next round of layoffs? Will I get into my first-choice college -- or any college at all? What will the biopsy show? Will my kids turn out OK? Will I like our new minister? Is the U.S. going to pull out of Iraq? Should I avoid air travel because of terrorism? When and how will I die?

As you prepare for this session, reflect on the uncertainties in your life. Think about how you've dealt with them in the past and are dealing with them currently.

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1. How is uncertainty affecting your life right now? Is there a particular situation in which you're waiting for an answer?
2. How do you cope with the uncertainty and ambiguity in your life?
3. Do you think of uncertainty as an unwelcome aberration in your well-ordered existence -- a threat -- or as a fact of life?
4. Has your attitude toward uncertainty changed during your lifetime? What has influenced the change?
5. Unitarian Universalism has a bias toward spiritual/religious/philosophical uncertainty. We talk all the time about embracing the mystery of life, unlike orthodox religions with doctrines that tell people how to live and revelation that dictates where they're going to end up. How does your UU faith influence the way you live with uncertainty?