

NAVIGATING UNCERTAINTY: Practicing Presence and Attention

"A big piece of it is being present in the moment and not trying to prescript what is happening. And this is a really challenging thing because all of us in all of our lives are constantly trying to think of this next thing and prep for it. ...(In improv) neither one of us on stage know what is going to happen next, so the only way we can make this work is if we are paying deep attention to what each of us is bringing to the table."

~ Tane Danger

conversation skills you will practice:

- presence
- paying deep attention
- careful listening
- navigating uncertainty

1

When life is interrupted by the unexpected, the **uncertain** can be uncomfortable. One way to support yourself, or someone you are with, is to practice being fully **present**, even if the future feels out of your control. Try practicing some of the ideas below to ground yourself in the present moment:

- Turn your **attention** to your breath. Try slowing your breath and feeling it as you inhale and exhale.
- Tune into your senses. Identify what you can see around you. Close your eyes and notice what you hear. Can you smell anything? Touch something nearby and try to describe how it feels. Use your senses to help you ground yourself in the present moment.
- Check in with yourself. How are you experiencing this moment in your body? Try doing a body scan slowly noting how your body feels from your head down to your feet. Do you notice any tightness or tension?

2

Imagine that you are sitting with someone else who is **navigating something uncertain**. What might you be able to do to help this person know you are fully present with them at this moment?

Want to do more with this activity? If so, add the next few steps.

3

Invite a partner to practice this activity with you. You can do it in person, on the phone, or virtually. In this activity, you and your partner will take turns speaking sentences to each other. The goal is to (1) practice **listening carefully** to your partner, and (2) be with not knowing what comes next, then responding.

Follow these steps:

- Listen **attentively** to your partner until they are finished with the entire sentence, and take note of the very last words spoken by your partner.
- When it is your turn, start your sentence with the last word your partner spoke.
- When you are done, your partner starts their next sentence with the last word you used.

For example: **Person One:** I really need a vacation somewhere **warm**.

Person Two: **Warm** towels always feel good after **showers**.

Person One: **Showers** are predicted in the south metro **today**.

Person Two: **Today** I will go for a walk with my **dog**.

4

Ask each other:

- How important was it to **listen** to your partner until they were finished with their statements?
- How did it feel to be **uncertain** about what was coming next, knowing you had to respond?

CONVERSATION CONSIDERATIONS

How might the practice of being fully **present** help you or someone you are with navigate a difficult situation? Why might **attentive listening** be an important skill during a difficult conversation? How might the practice of **navigating uncertainty** serve you when engaging in something challenging?

