

EXERCISE 8.5: EXPLORING YOUR RULES AND BELIEFS ABOUT UNCERTAINTY

The table below offers some rules and beliefs that are related to the intolerance of uncertainty. Complete the questionnaire. Rate each item then return to the items you scored most highly on. Which situations do the high-scoring items apply to? List them. How can you begin to challenge this rule by changing the way you act?

Assessing my rules or beliefs about uncertainty

Rules and Beliefs Questionnaire	
Review the list of statements below. Circle the number that best represents you.	
	Strongly disagree Strongly agree
Predict and prevent bad things	
I should always work out everything that could go wrong.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I am always responsible for stopping bad things from happening.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If things are uncertain then assume the worst	
If there is uncertainty, then something will go wrong.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I should avoid change.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If there is a chance bad things will happen, then they will.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I make a mistake, then the repercussions are unknown.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I feel uncertain, then something bad will happen.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If a situation is uncertain, then it is dangerous.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Doubt capacity to deal with the problem	
If I do something new, then I cannot be sure that I will cope.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If my life is uncertain, then I will not cope.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I am surprised, then I will not know how to act.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I can't see what's coming, then I will not cope.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If others help, then I can handle it.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I ask for others' advice, then I will be more certain.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Certainty should be achievable/desirable	
I should always be certain.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Overcoming Worry and Generalised Anxiety Disorder

If I am certain, then I feel safe.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I am certain, then I will be prepared.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I am certain, then I make good decisions.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I do not ask others for their opinions, then I will doubt my judgement.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Everything people say should add up and make sense.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Uncertainty is distressing.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Only act when certain	
If I am sure, then I can act.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I do it myself, then I can be certain that it is done right.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I must always ask others before acting.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
A good decision is one I never question.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I must make careful choices.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I keep a routine, then I will not worry.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I keep a routine, then I will be more certain.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I feel uncertain, then I will be stuck.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not being certain means that I will not be able to predict or prevent bad things from happening	
If I open myself up to uncertainty, then I will not be able to cope.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I open myself up to uncertainty, then I will be overwhelmed.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I open myself up to uncertainty, I will worry uncontrollably.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I am uncertain, then I must be wrong.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Learning to tolerate uncertainty

Unless I cover all the bases, then I can't proceed.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I feel uncertain, then I will not act.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I can't be certain about tomorrow then I will avoid going out.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If others do things, then I cannot be certain that they have done it right.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I can't see the end of the road, then I will not start my journey.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I am doubtful, then I will not act.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I make a decision, then I should always question it.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I make a quick decision, then it will come back to haunt me.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I put it off, then I won't feel uncertain.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I let others out of my sight, then I cannot manage the uncertainty.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I should trust my instincts and avoid anything uncertain.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
I should avoid change.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
If I make a mistake, then I will be overwhelmed with doubts.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Each set of rules can have dozens of variants and they will apply to many situations, or to only a few. If these rules are resonating with you, now is the time to act to break the rules on purpose (see the chapter on behavioural experiments).