# The Uncertainty Toolkit

The purpose of this document is to give you a space to record your thoughts and ideas from the session. You'll find key ideas from the session, activities to complete and plenty of space to make your own notes.



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# Getting comfortable with being uncomfortable

### Living with uncertainty

We are in a time of constant ambiguity and uncertainty. There is a lot beyond our control. There are big, pressing issues, and navigating them means staying curious and adaptable.

For fundraisers, this might show up as shifting funder priorities, unpredictable income, changing supporter behaviour, or questions about how AI will change the way we raise money.

When such big things feel out of reach, it can seem impossible to do anything useful. But what we can do is make good choices when everything feels up in the air.

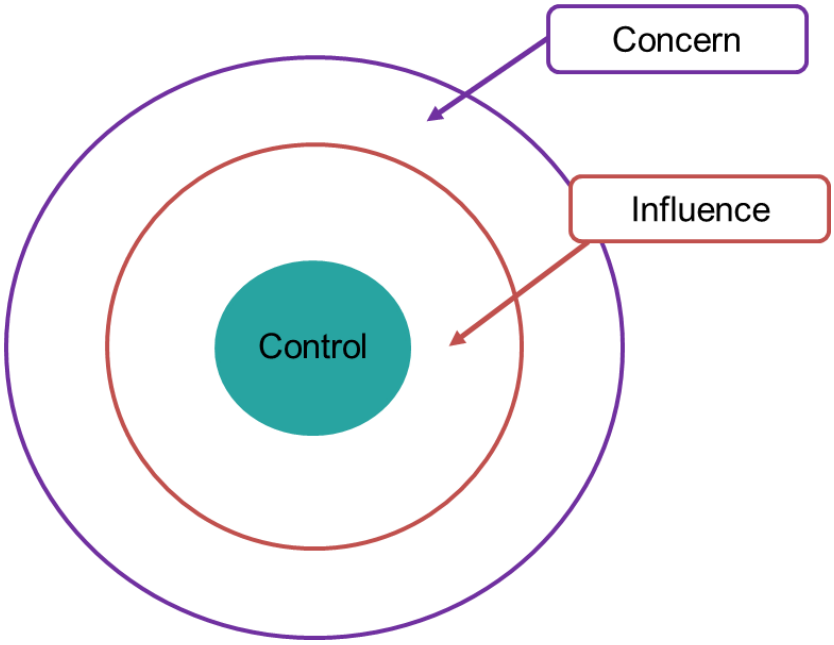
### A lifelong skill

The first thing to understand is that a level of uncertainty is part of working life now. Accepting doesn't mean giving in, or waiting passively for things to change. It means choosing the actions you can take, instead of worrying about what you can't do.

Getting comfortable with uncertainty is a lifelong skill. To build this skill up, we need to try different things. Our advice is to try something. If it works, repeat it until it becomes a habit, and keep honing it. When it no longer serves you, try something new.

# What we can and can't do

In his book The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, Stephen Covey explains that we often worry about things we can't control. Our worries can become a barrier that stops us dealing with the issue causing them in the first place. It helps to sort our concerns by how much control we have over them:




**Circle of concern:** things we care about but can't control. As we can't change them, we need to limit how much energy and worry we give them, and find healthy ways to live with them.

**Circle of influence:** situations we can affect indirectly, although we can't necessarily control them. This often involves talking to others.

**Circle of control:** things we can directly control, such as our behaviours, actions, effort and attitude.

Sorting our concerns this way can reduce overwhelm. Instead of worrying about everything, we can shift our attention to what we can control and influence.

For example, if a major funder is reviewing their priorities:

- **Concern:** we can't control the funder's final decision, or the wider economic climate affecting giving
- **Influence:** we can influence the relationship by sharing our impact, asking questions and making a clear case for support
- **Control:** we can control how we prepare, which other prospects we prioritise, and how we look after ourselves and our team

| What is within your control at the moment? What could you influence? What else are you concerned about? |
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# ACCEPT micro-habits

The ACCEPT framework is a set of micro-habits: actions that are often small, but impactful. Small actions are doable, and they compound over time.

- **A**nchor in your values
- **C**hange your standards
- **C**ontrol the next action
- **E**motional check in
- **P**ractice reflection
- **T**alk it out

Choose what works for you and leave what doesn't. You don't have to use all of them. Try one, test it, and if it works, keep doing it. If it doesn't, try something else.

These habits won't make every problem go away. They may not give you more certainty. They are intended to help you build your skill in navigating difficulty, and make choices that work for you.

**Anchor in your values**

When everything feels confusing, values are a rope we can hold onto. They are the beliefs and principles that guide how we work, how we treat others and how we make decisions, and they don't change when the situation around us does.

**The habit:** take note each day of how your values are being challenged, and how they are helping you.

For example, you might ask:

- How are my values being challenged right now?
- How are they helping me?
- How can I live those values today?

**Change your standards**

When things are uncertain, focus on impact, not perfection. This matters most when you are overwhelmed, under-resourced or facing a lot of demand.

**The habit:** ask yourself:

- What is good enough right now?
- What will be impactful, even if it's not perfect?

For example, spend five minutes at the start of each working day prioritising what is most important. One way to do this is to label each task A, B or C by importance, then focus on the As. Redefining success as "completing my As" rather than "finishing my list" means you can work with less guilt and frustration.

Another example would be to talk to your manager, not about what would be brilliant or hugely successful, but about what is essential: the thing that must get done when everything is overwhelming and demands are high. In a busy appeal period, that might mean agreeing which supporter communications must go out now, and which can wait until next period.

**Control the next action**

When things are opaque and unclear, don't plan too far ahead. Focus on the next action: the part you can control. We crave certainty, and a single, doable next action gives us a small dose of it.

**The habit:** micro acts of certainty. Ask yourself:

- What is the next useful action I can take today?
- What action could I take to reduce the thing I'm worried about?

For example, if a trust's funding round has been delayed, you can't control the decision date. You can control how you use the wait and take a proactive action: send one short update with fresh impact figures so your application stays current, flag the delay to your finance team so the income forecast is adjusted, and research two

new prospects this week so your pipeline isn't resting on that one grant.

### Emotional check in

Emotions are a signal. Explore them, rather than reacting to them. Frustration, for example, can be a signal that something is blocking your progress. Helplessness can be a signal that you don't have a clear sense of the impact of your actions. Noticing this can help redirect you towards what you can control, or prompt you to reach out for support.

**The habit:** take a break and:

- pause and breathe
- name the emotion
- normalise it: all feelings are normal, especially in uncertain times

Avoiding tough emotions isn't control. For example. you might feel tough emotions after a funding rejection, or a difficult supporter conversation, or another income target that feels out of reach. It is better to have a check in moment than to try and supress your emotions.

### Practice reflection

We can learn from every situation. Learning loops are a great micro-habit, because they keep you curious and build adaptability.

**The habit:** review, reflect, learn, plan, repeat. Spend ten minutes at the end of each week asking yourself:

- **Review:** what happened this week? What did I do?
- **Reflect:** what went well? What was difficult?
- **Learn:** what does this tell me about the situation, and about myself?
- **Plan:** what would be even better if I tried it next week?

Then repeat the loop the following week. Over time, it shows you what you've achieved and what is improving, even when things feel messy.

**Talk it out**

Feeling supported takes the loneliness out of ambiguity.

**The habit:** share how you feel without seeking a resolution, with friends, family, colleagues or your wider network. Be clear that you are looking to share, not to solve. And when it gets too much, recognise when it's time to get help.

For example, you can dedicate energy to proactively nurturing your professional relationships. You can choose to reach out and connect, just like you have with Fundraising Everywhere, to build your network.

Try spending ten minutes a week on your network. Who can you chat with, or connect with? It can help to think about:

- Who listens without judging?
- Who has experience of this kind of uncertainty?
- Who gives honest feedback, and helps you see the bigger picture?

Other fundraisers often understand the pressures best, so peer networks, sector events and online communities can be a good place to start.

# Application

Which of the ACCEPT micro-habits resonates with you? Choose one now and explore. Don't try to be perfect. Try something new.

| The micro-habit I'm trying: |
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# Take Action

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| What is causing you uncertainty at the moment? |
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| What habits have served you before now? |
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| What other techniques might you try? |
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| How could you test these and keep building your skill set? |
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# Find out more

This session draws on ideas from two =mc Learning programmes:

- **Navigating Change with Confidence:** support for anyone going through change at work, exploring how we respond to change and tools to handle it proactively. www.managementcentre.co.uk/training-programmes/navigating-change
- **Success at Work:** a modular programme helping people build the knowledge, tools and resources to thrive in their careers. www.managementcentre.co.uk/training-programmes/success-at-work

We also have additional ideas available for you here:

https://www.managementcentre.co.uk/uncertaintytoolkit/

- **The 7 Challenges of Change:** our insight article on the common challenges people face during change. www.managementcentre.co.uk/insights/7-challenges-of-change
- **Managing Change:** for anyone leading or supporting others through change. www.managementcentre.co.uk/training-programmes/managing-change
- **One-to-One Coaching:** tailored support to help you focus your energy and build confidence. www.managementcentre.co.uk/training-programmes/online-coaching

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