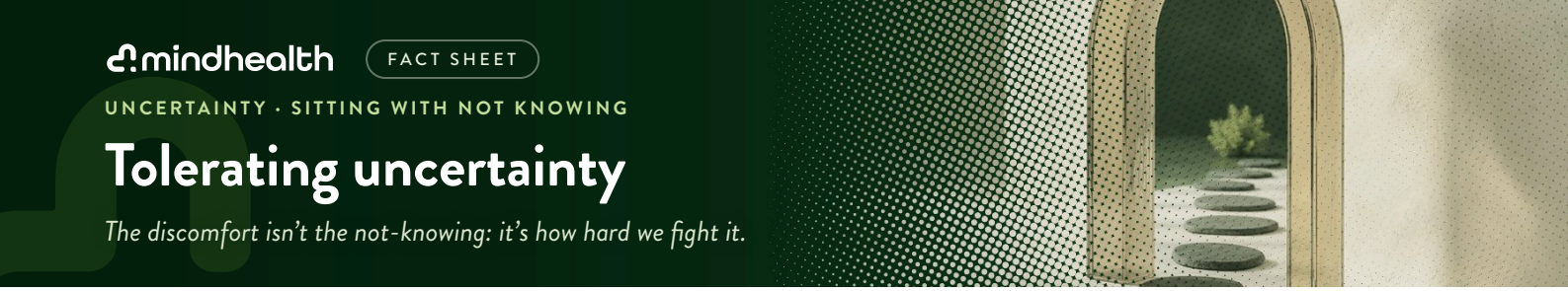
mindhealth FACT SHEET

UNCERTAINTY · SITTING WITH NOT KNOWING

Tolerating uncertainty

The discomfort isn't the not-knowing: it's how hard we fight it.



The what-ifs
A mind chasing answers

The discomfort
A pull to resolve it now

Seeking certainty
Checking, googling, reassurance

01 Why uncertainty is so uncomfortable

The brain likes to predict, so not-knowing can feel unsafe, and some of us are wired to find it especially hard. Difficulty tolerating uncertainty sits underneath a lot of worry, checking and reassurance-seeking: if we could just be sure, we think, the anxiety would stop. Life, though, rarely offers that kind of certainty.

02 Chasing certainty backfires

Every attempt to be certain (googling, over-planning, seeking reassurance) works for a moment, then the doubt returns and the habit grows. The way out isn't more certainty; it's building tolerance for the open question. Small, deliberate practice at letting things stay unresolved teaches the nervous system that uncertainty is uncomfortable, not dangerous.

03 What genuinely helps

- Noticing certainty-seeking, then delaying it
- Practising small, deliberate acts of "not knowing"
- Making good-enough decisions without full information
- Refocusing on what's actually in your control
- CBT for the worry that rides on uncertainty

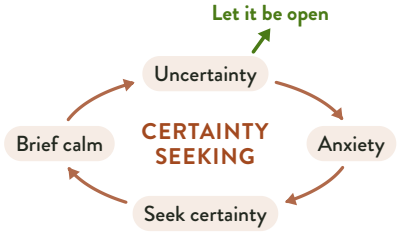
A PRACTICAL STORY

From needing to know to letting it stay open



THE CYCLE

Chasing certainty



Seeking certainty calms you briefly, then feeds the need. Letting it stay open loosens the grip.

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Let it be open

1. Notice the urge to "make sure"
2. Delay or drop one check
3. Let the question stay unanswered

You can act well without being certain.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

If a need for certainty is fuelling worry, checking or indecision, a psychologist can help. Ask your GP about a Mental Health Treatment Plan for rebates.

DID YOU KNOW?

Intolerance of uncertainty was developed as an idea by researchers in Quebec, including Michel Dugas and Robert Ladouceur, in the 1990s.

Dugas et al., Behaviour Research and Therapy, 1998

THE KEY TAKEAWAY

Certainty is rarely on offer. Peace comes from learning to live well without it.

Need support right now? Lifeline **13 11 14** · Emergency **000** — available 24/7. More options: **mindhealth.com.au/urgent-help**

TALK TO US WHEN YOU'RE READY

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