



WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO

I'm sure you have had the experience of being in a situation where you have said "I haven't got a clue what to do now".

We often feel like that in new situations or when we are faced with something extremely challenging. This brochure gives you hints on what to do in those times when you feel like you just don't know what to do.

- ◆ **First of all recognize that the feelings of anxiety we all get at times of uncertainty are normal.** If you are feeling uncertain, insecure, confused or foolish this is not a comment on your character or will. Most people will experience one or more of these negative emotions during times of high stress. **However avoid letting the anxiety escalate into panic.** Panicking only makes it harder to deal with the situation before you. Remember that any situation you face has been faced and survived by someone else already. There is a way (usually several ways) to deal with just about anything.
- ◆ **Give yourself some time out.** Start by taking several deep breaths to calm yourself. Then realize that you do have time (even if only a few minutes) to think about what you want to do. Use this time to stop and reflect calmly. This is important, as otherwise we tend to make snap decisions that can often lead to further complications. Time out is different from procrastination or denial. You are not putting off or avoiding the issue. Instead you are taking time to get yourself in the best possible mental frame to deal with the issues that face you.
- ◆ **Whenever possible talk to others about the situation.** If they have faced similar issues, their advice could be invaluable. Even if they have not dealt with the same situation, a new perspective may help you to see previously unrecognized options. For many people the act of talking about an issue leads them to see potential solutions. In addition, there is the relief

that comes from just sharing our feelings of confusion and uncertainty with an understanding listener.

- ◆ Think through how you want to deal with what is occurring. **Formulate definite plans but be prepared to be flexible.** Ask yourself “What do I want the outcome of the situation to be?” Then ask yourself what you need to do to make that outcome happen. Set about planning how you will get to your desired outcome. Break the big picture down into several small, sequential steps. Then work on each in a step by step fashion. Also don’t just make one set of plans. Have a plan A and a plan B. Be prepared to make Plan C & D if necessary!
- ◆ **Utilize your faith.** The faith you draw on may be faith in your abilities, as you reflect on how you dealt with previous difficulties. Or the faith you draw on may be your faith in God and your belief that God will show you the way through the present circumstances. Whichever one it is, make time for quiet reflection on the situation and on the outcome you desire. Times of challenge and uncertainty are often good times to go back and reaffirm the certainties that have taken us to this point in life. Review the principles and beliefs that are important to you and see if they provide guidance and/or encouragement at this time.
- ◆ **Learn from the experience.** This will not be the only time in life you are gripped by uncertainty. Learning to deal with the feelings that come with not knowing what to do will prove helpful when we face similar anxiety producing situations at other times. Accept that life will always have challenges. However remember the corollary to that is given in the famous statement, “This too shall pass”. Hopefully, as you reflect on these situations later on, you will be able to speak of the lessons learned at the times in your life when you didn’t know what to do.
- ◆ **Seek expert help.** If you find that even after using the self-help suggestions above, you are still having difficulty deciding what to do, then it might be useful to talk with a counsellor about the issue. Your counsellor can help you understand why you are having difficulties deciding what to do and can also help you objectively look at your options. If indecision is a chronic problem, counselling can help you learn the skills needed for decision making.

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Also available on the UCS website:
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