



Managing Expectation in Times of Uncertainty

Duke Residency and Executive Coaching Programs

MettaSolutions

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 **Duke** University School of Medicine



- Coach Facilitator Introductions
- Participant introduction
- Agenda
 - Uncertainty
 - Defining the 2 parts
 - How do we work with them?
 - A Case – Real-time, laser-coaching
 - Take-aways



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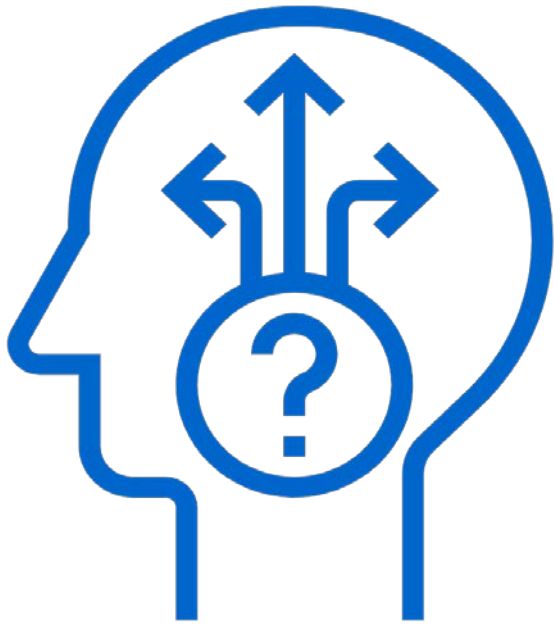


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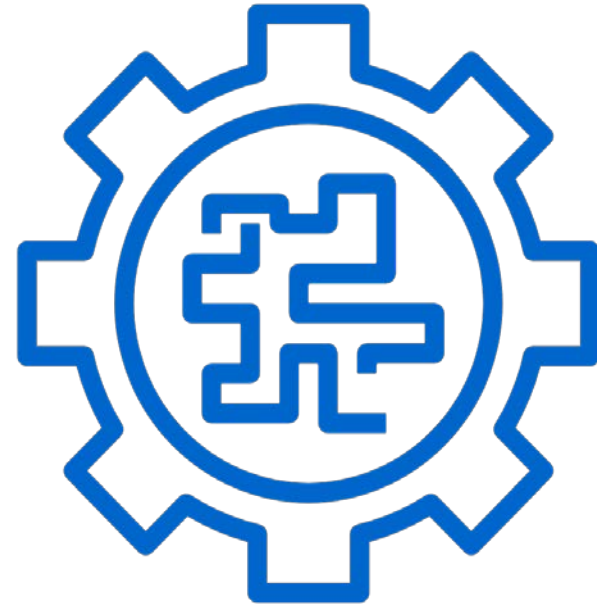
What is Uncertainty?



A state in which we cannot properly structure or categorize an event or series of events.

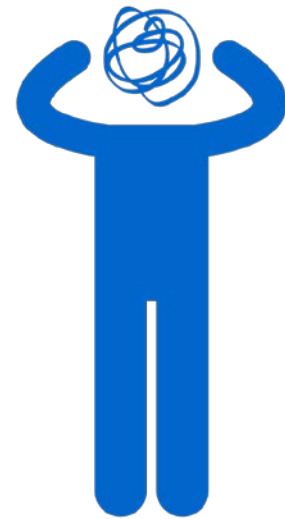


The stressors and stimuli are usually ambiguous, novel and complicated.



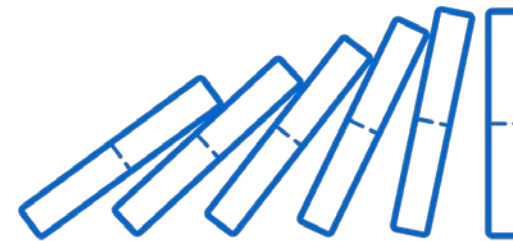
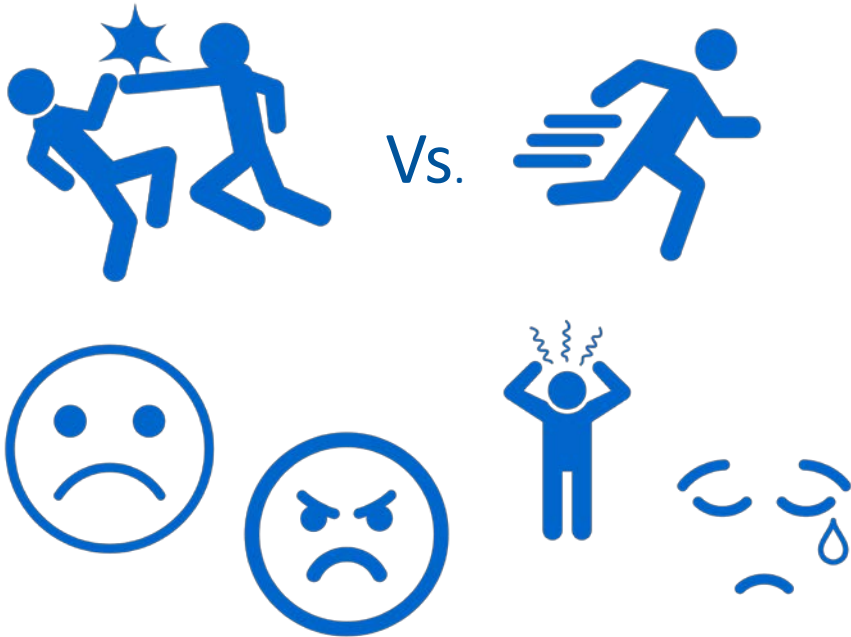


- We struggle to determine meaning, and find ourselves asking:
 - What is happening?
 - How long will this go on?
 - Are we at the beginning, the middle, the end?
 - Why is this happening?
 - Can I do anything to change it?



A series of complex emotions can arise – heightened emotional arousal (fight or flight), numbing, sadness, anxiety, and grief.

The stresses of uncertainty are cumulatively challenging for those with previous trauma and or existing anxiety or depression.



What happens to us and our teams in uncertainty?

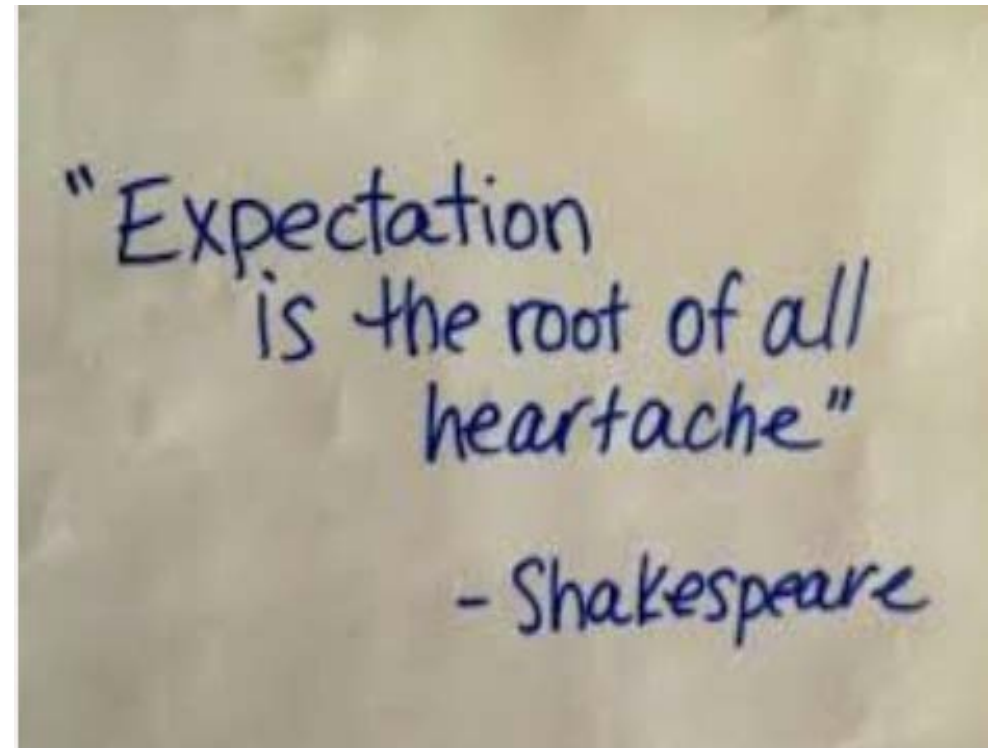


- Our neuroanatomy has us scan for threat.
 - We are hypervigilant - in a state of increased reactivity
 - *So are our teammates and colleagues.*
 - Snowball effect when constantly scanning - on high alert.
- We have become so accustomed that we may not realize that we are in a state of high alert. We feel numb.
- Our ability to focus and be productive is impaired.

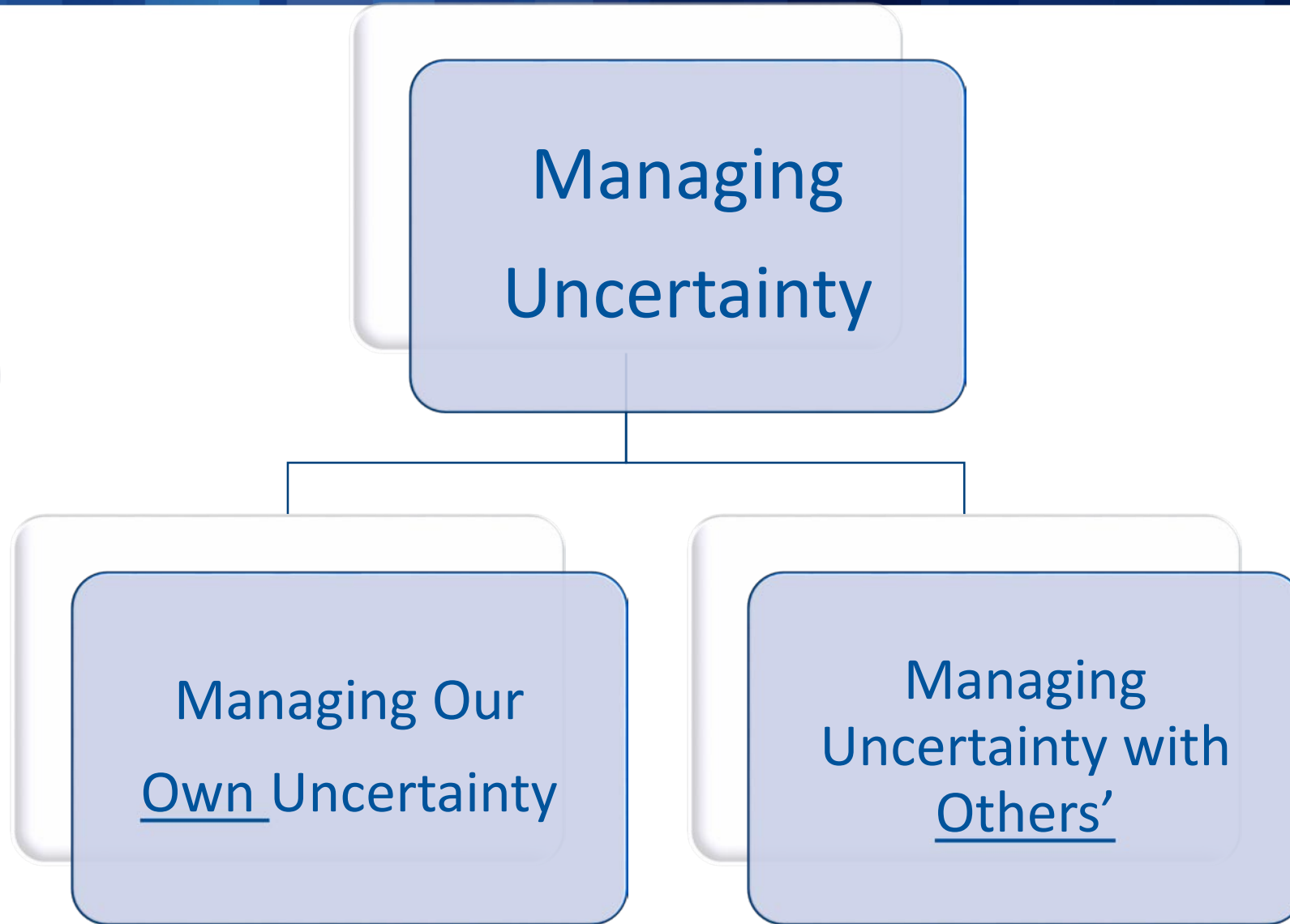
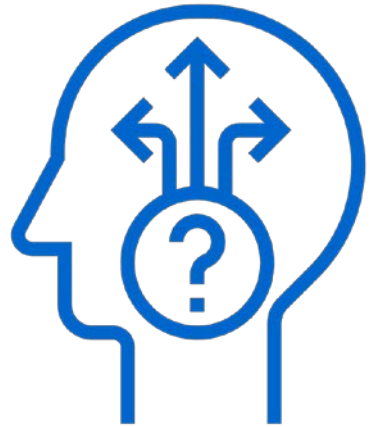


Expectations - noun

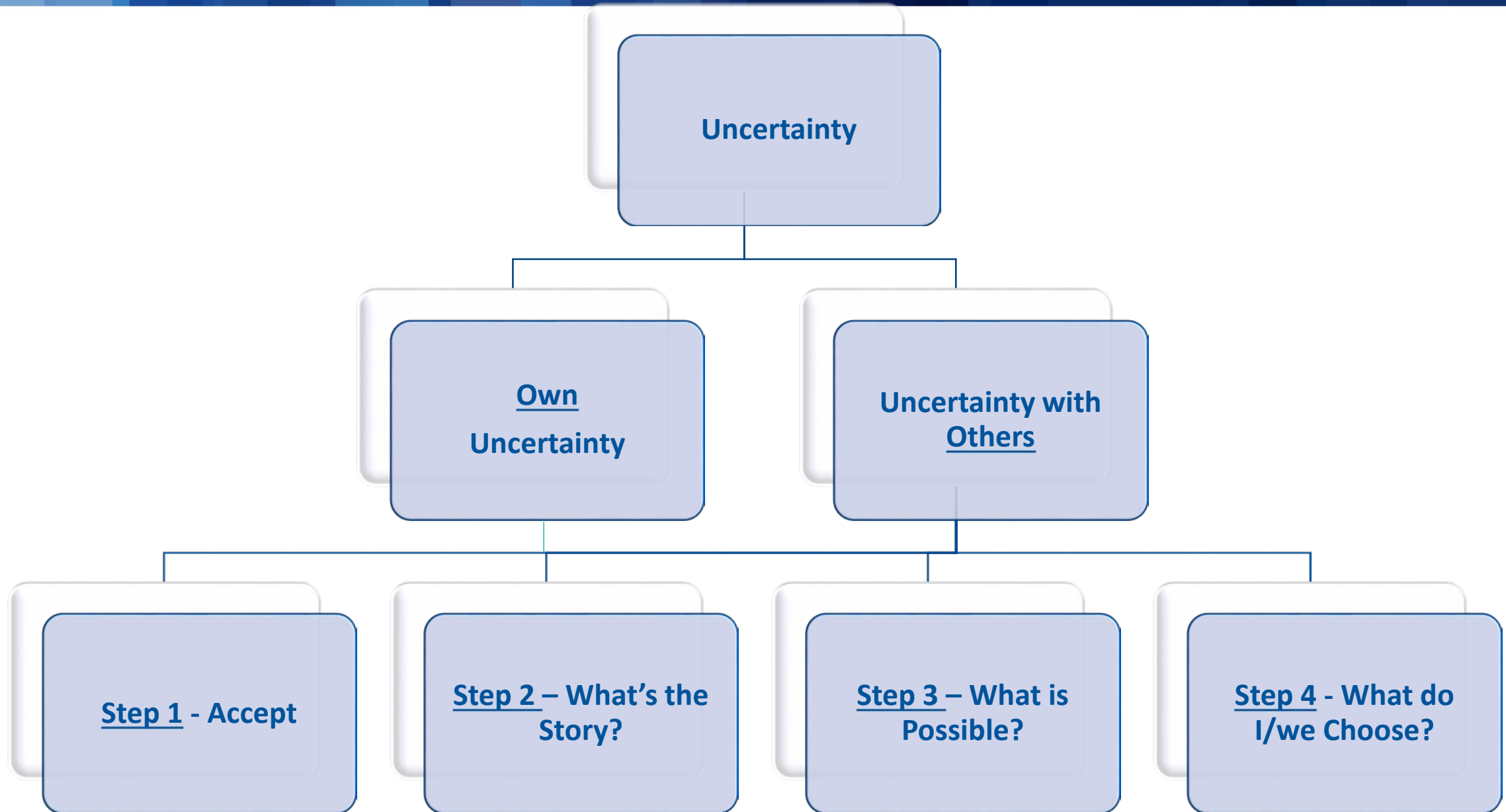
- A strong belief that something will happen or be the case in the future.
 - "reality had not lived up to expectations"
- A belief that someone will or should achieve something.
 - "students had high expectations about prom night festivities."



The Two Parts of Managing Uncertainty



Managing Uncertainty – Common Steps





Acceptance of stresses, thoughts and feelings (ours and others')

- Be honest about what we are feeling
 - Most are trained to “push through” or to quickly fix problem
 - Identifying feelings can be difficult – most of us have a limited vocabulary
 - Stresses are held and expressed by the body – physical sensations
 - Take time to check in – with curiosity vs. judgement
- Acknowledge that any of these emotions are okay.
 - Acceptance, rather than avoidance or resistance
 - Emotions are information, data.
- Share and listen to ourselves and each other's experiences with curiosity and compassion.
- Treat ourselves and others with grace. Work to see the best, when we are not at our best.





- As we search for meaning, we unconsciously create a narrative.
 - *Example* – My chair has not responded to my email. She doesn’t value my input.
 - Sometimes, it is easy to go to worst case scenario (our untrained brains have a negativity bias).
- In the midst of uncertainty, what is the story you find you are telling yourself?
- Another way of saying it, “What are the assumptions I or we are making?” What are the “should?”
 - Explore with curiosity and without judgment.
 - Talk with a trusted friend.
 - Create psychological safety to share assumptions.
- Then ask, is it true?
 - Metaphor - The second arrow.
- What are some other possible scenarios or explanations?



- It can be helpful to remember that uncertainty brings new possibilities.
- In the midst of the challenge, are there new skills or parts of yourself that are being called forward? What are you noticing about yourself?
- Recall a time when you or a person you admire faced uncertainty and things went well?
 - How did you or they manage it?
 - What was helpful?
 - What supported you?





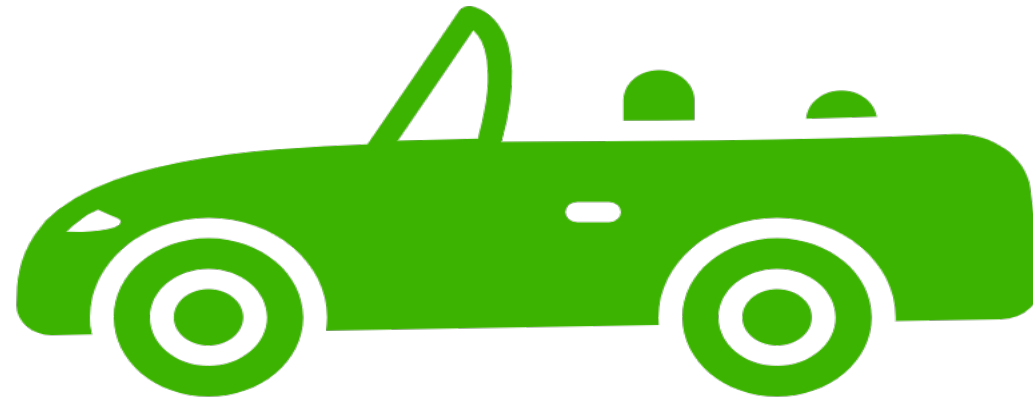
What do I choose? What do we choose?

- The goal of noticing our responses to uncertainty is not to make them go away. We often cannot do that. Rather, we want to learn how to navigate the experience.
- Instead of asking, “What can I control?” ask, “What can I choose?”
 - For example, what values do you ground yourself in that do not change?
 - What values do you hold that are present in the midst of uncertainty?
 - These may be things like kindness, compassion, integrity, humor.
 - How do I choose to be in the midst of this?
- As a team, “What do we choose?” “What are the standards or values we want to bring to this time?”





- A metaphor some use when navigating difficulty is to think about driving a car.
- The uncertainty does not get to drive. Metaphorically, you drive, being guided by your values.
- The uncertainty (or the anxiety, or the fear) does not go away, but it has to ride in the back seat. You stay behind the wheel.





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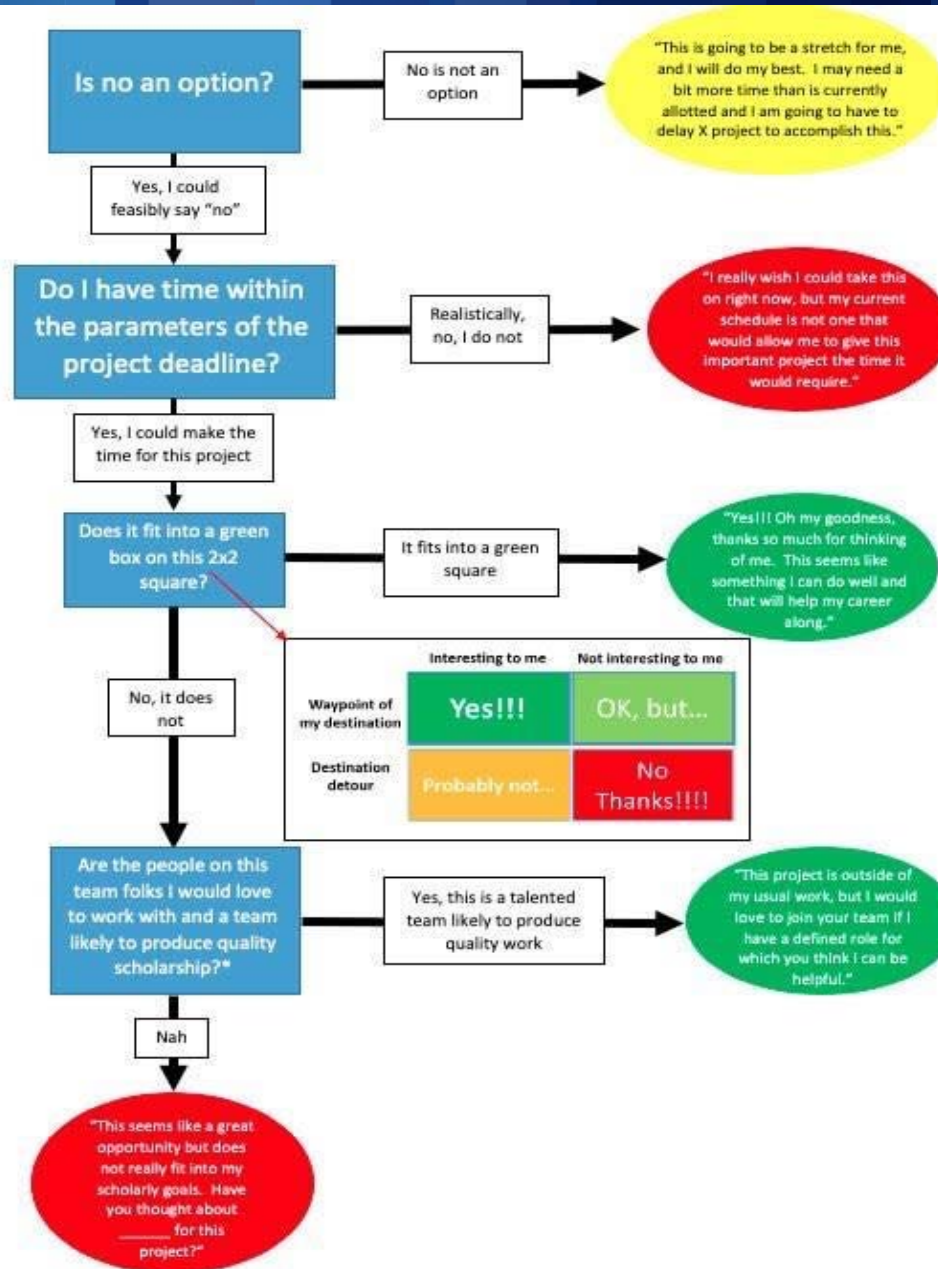
- Questions from the group?
- Take-aways

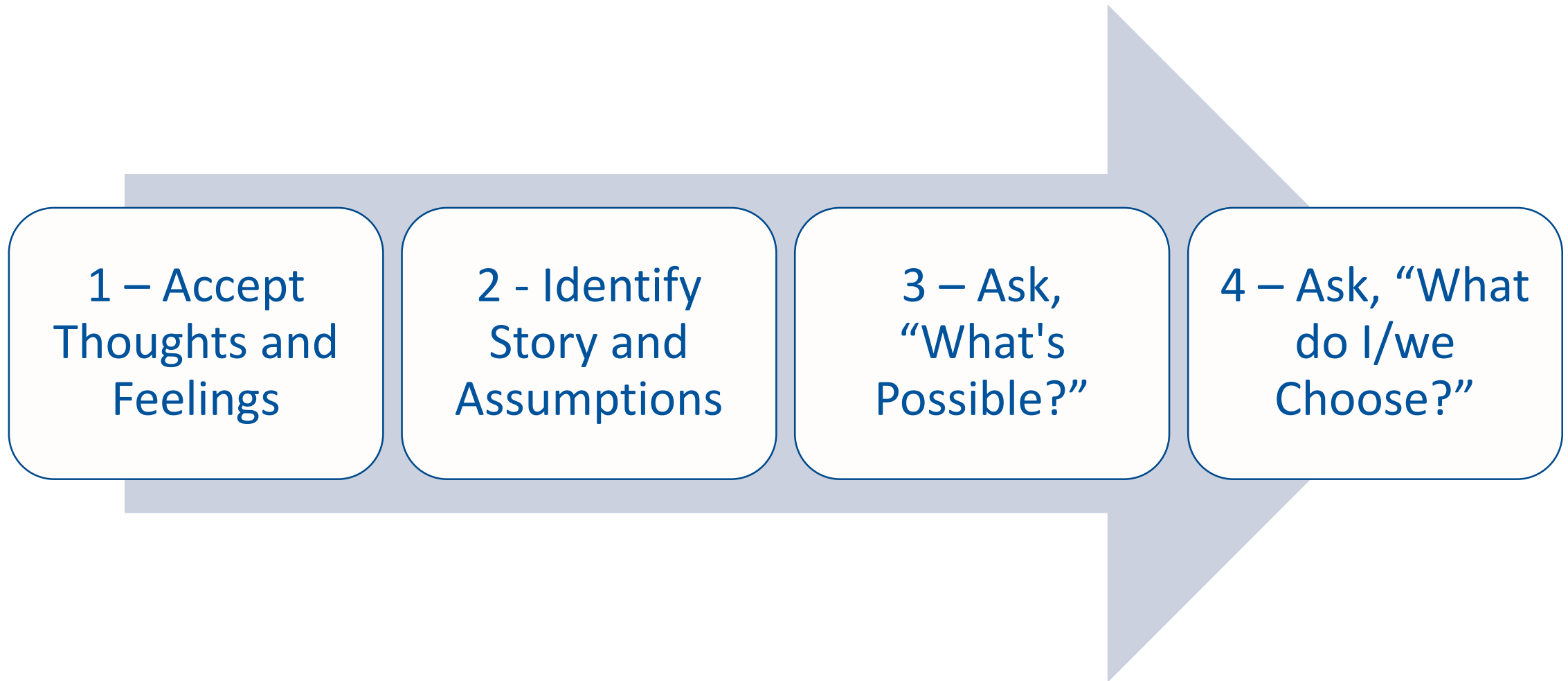
Identify Priorities



Eisenhower Matrix

When do I say "no?"





Questions for Individual Reflection



1. How are you doing?
2. When did you realize that COVID was going to significantly change the experience of the year? What thoughts came up?
3. When did you realize that the death of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbury, Breonna Taylor and so many others was going to have the impact it is having? What thoughts came up for you?
4. What has been toughest? What reactions do you notice yourself having?
5. What were you hoping would happen that has been put on hold or cancelled?
 - How are you dealing with that?
6. What supports you in these times?
 - Who do you trust to listen and support you?
7. What is one small choice you can make in your favor?
8. What are positive things you have discovered about yourself in this time of great uncertainty?



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