

# Beyond Stressed: Coping with the Pressure of Uncertainty

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# UNCERTAINTY

“In these unprecedented times...”

“Events have amplified...”

“We need to level-set...”

“Get comfortable with ambiguity...”



## DURING OUR TIME...

- ❑ Explore uncertainty
- ❑ Understand what happens when we are uncertain
- ❑ Discuss three proven tactics to manage the adverse impacts caused by uncertainty

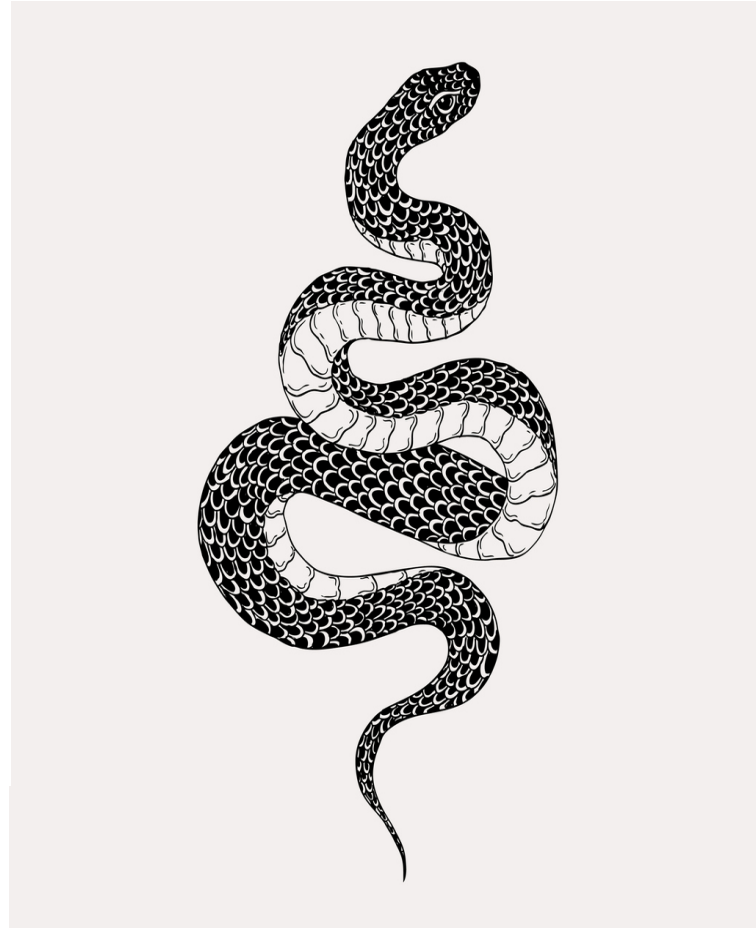
# UNCERTAINTY

- The state of being uncertain
- Indeterminate
- Problematic
- Not clearly defined
- Meta-ignorance

- We know  
we don't  
know

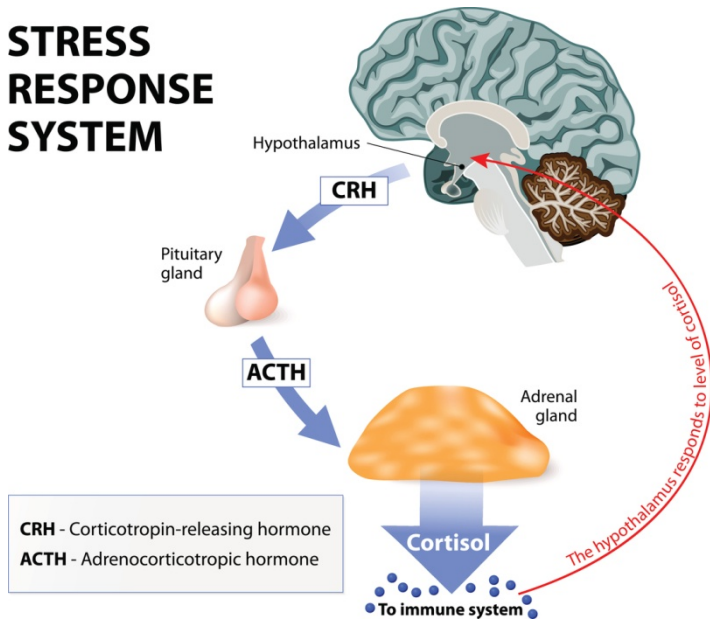


Experiment: Participants who were certain they would receive a shock showed less stress responses than those who had a 50% chance of being shocked.



# Survival Advantage

## STRESS RESPONSE SYSTEM



- Natural alarm system.
- Cortisol slows functions that would be harmful in a fight or flight situation.
- Also communicates with brain regions that control mood, motivation, and fear and can influence behavior.

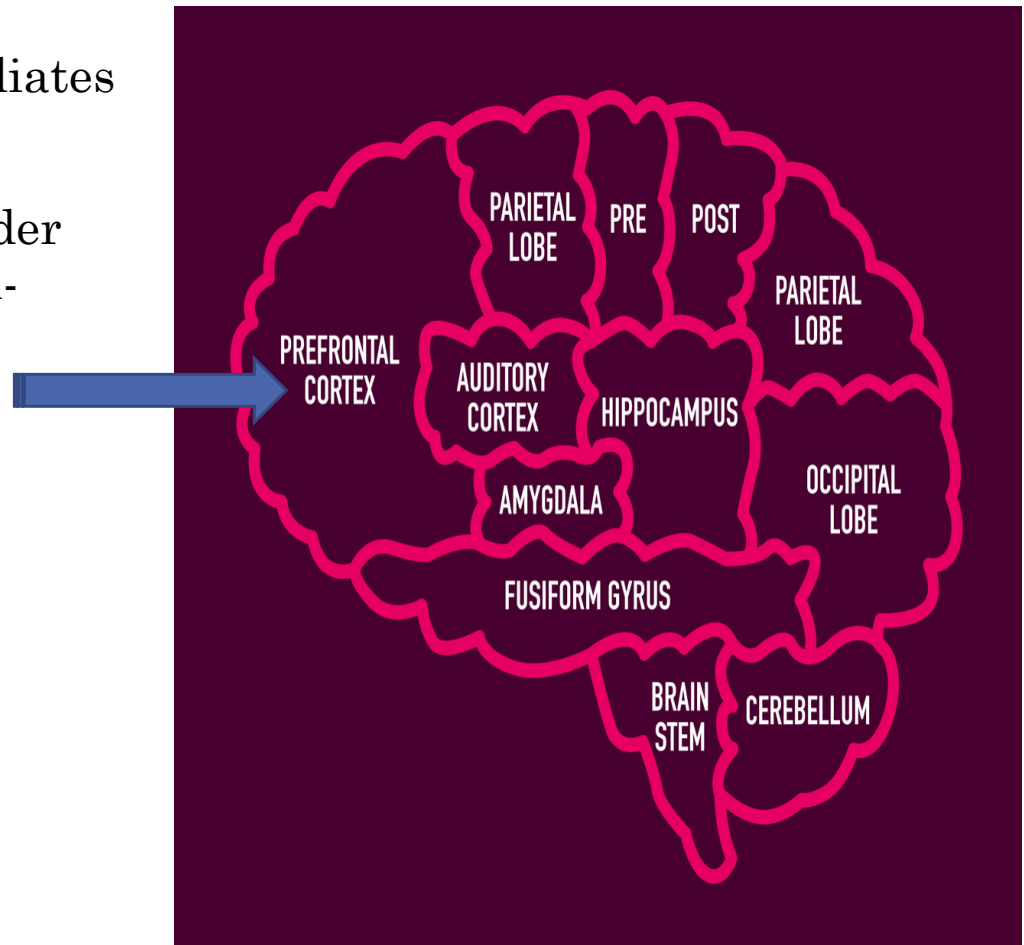
# What mice have taught us.



- Researchers studied the brains of mice when confronted with wide-open spaces.
- Ventral hippocampus – involved with memories and emotions – stimulated.
- Labeled these “anxiety neurons.”
- Mice stayed in dark corners.
- When anxiety neurons deactivated, mice wandered into the wide unknown, oblivious to potential predators.

# Human attenuation process

- Prefrontal cortex mediates behavior.
- Involved in higher order thinking and decision-making.





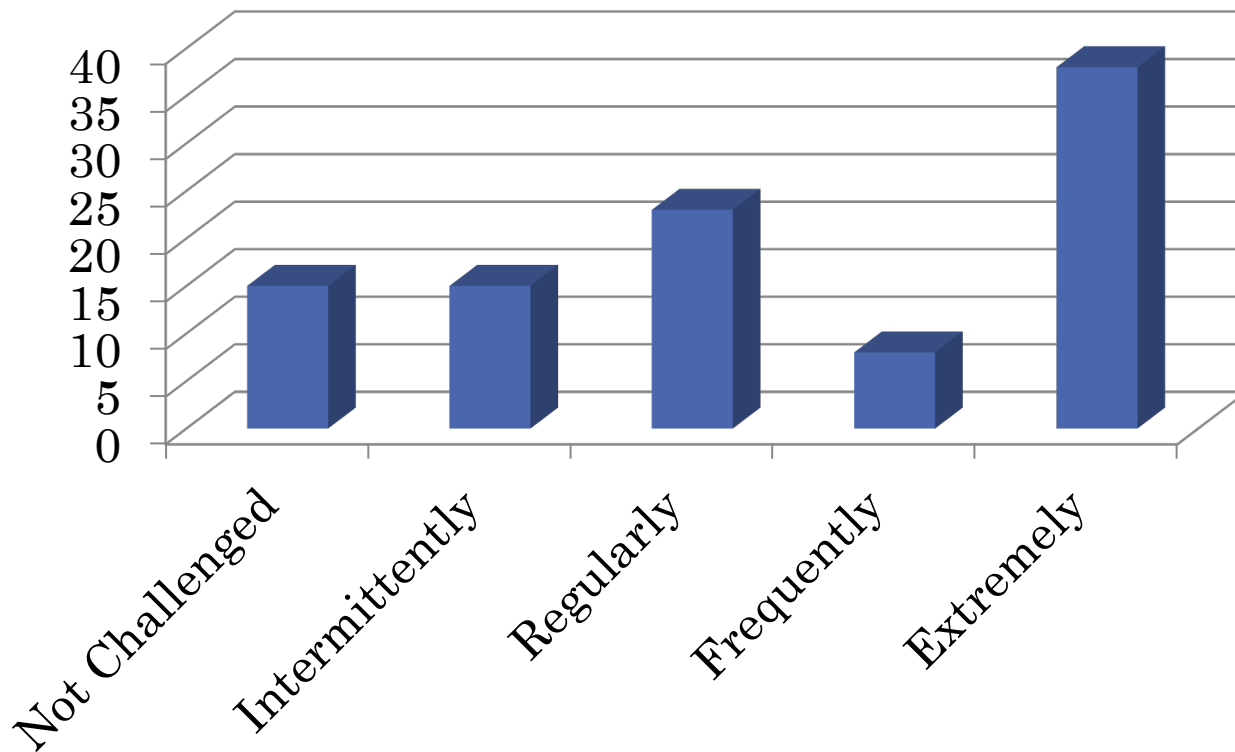
# Uncertainty Mediation Tactic 1: Attenuate Input



- Mice + Wide open spaces = Anxiety
- Humans + Reading a news story of a young person's tragic death = 74% increase in overestimating the probability of future negative events such as floods, accidents, or diseases (Johnson & Tversky, 1983)
- Attenuate input = Decreased stress response/increased accuracy to predict – i.e. decreased uncertainty.

# Survey Results

## Managing Anxiety



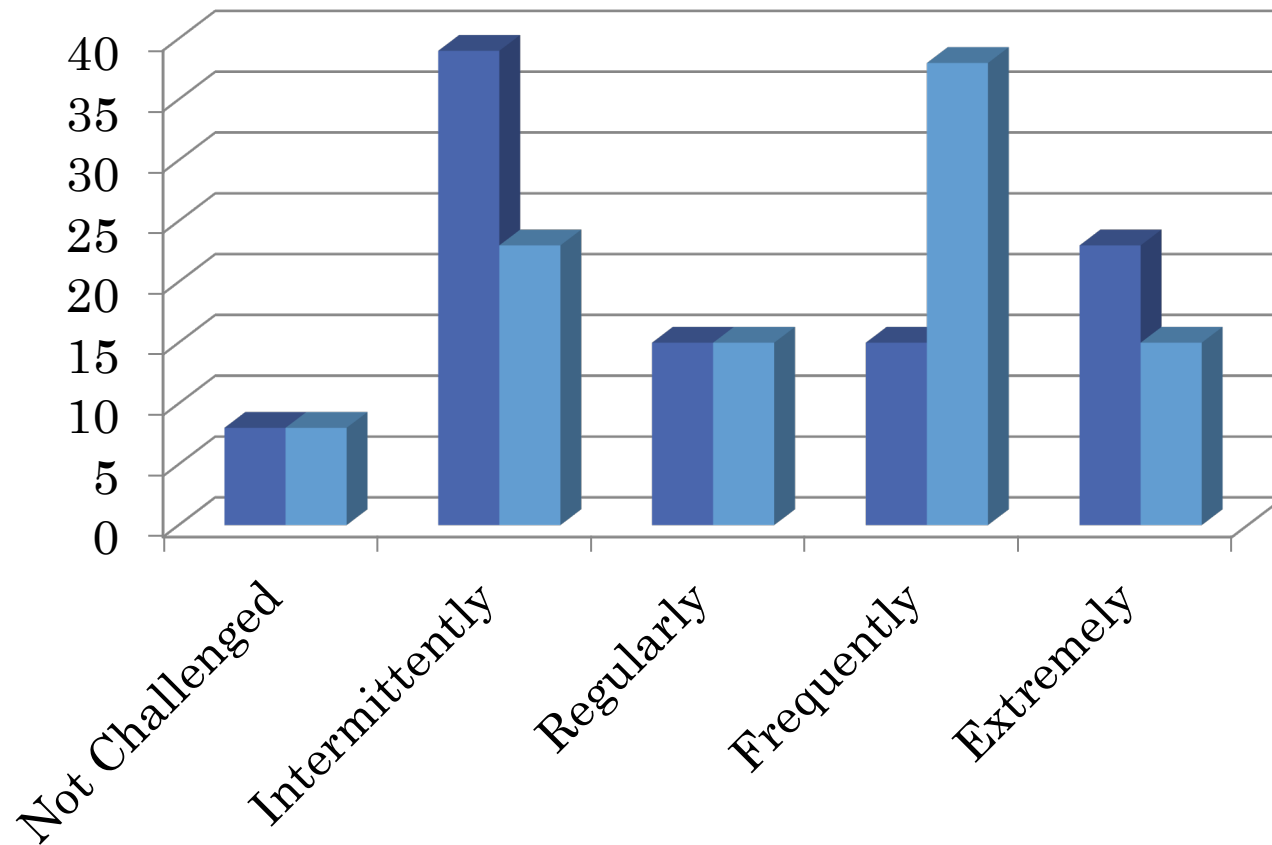
# Uncertainty Mediation Tactic 2: Apply Contextual Intelligence

- Consider YOUR circumstances



- Find the Efficiency/Resilience Balance

# Self-Care and Work/Life Balance Results



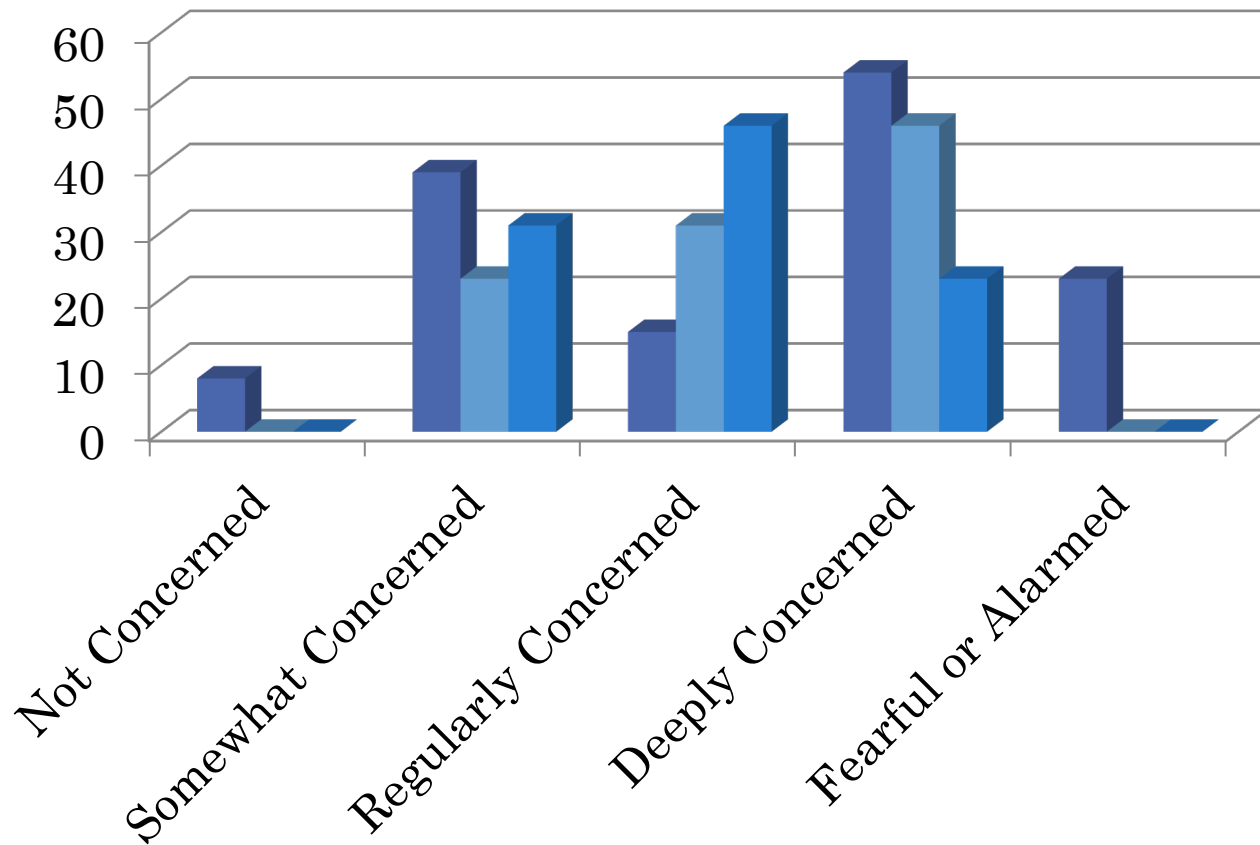
# Uncertainty Tactic 3: Control Simulations



- Natural survival tendency to simulate for the “worst case scenario”
- Over balance with positive simulations
- Signal detection theory supports notion that we will perceive what we need



# Divisiveness, Others' Risk Behaviors, Student-Related Issues



# STAY CONNECTED

