

Do You Have Some “What if...” Questions?

Written by Mrs. Beutel, Catholic Charities Counselor

What if we cannot return to school in the fall? What if my parent cannot find another job? What if I or someone I love gets sick? Underlying these questions is a feeling of uncertainty, and dealing with uncertainty is not easy. Many of us are feeling uncertain right now and asking “what if...” questions.

It is important to understand that we often ask the “what if...” questions as an attempt to reduce our worry. If we can get a *certain answer* to our question, then we can stop worrying, if we believe in the validity of the answer. For some “what if...” questions, this may be possible; however, oftentimes, the answer is only a guess.

Guess answers do not help much in reducing our worry because we know that guesses are inherently uncertain. It is more helpful to answer our “what if...” questions with an acknowledgment of feeling uncertain and a *refocusing question*. Here is an example: **“I am feeling uncertain right now. How can I cope with this uncertainty?”**

Now this question can lead you to a productive answer. Once you develop a good answer to this question, your “what if...” questions will likely be less troublesome. Here are some recommendations on how you can cope with feelings of uncertainty:

- Use healthy coping skills (ex. journaling, praying, listening to inspirational music, reading, sharing your concerns with a trusted other).
- Engage in confident self-talk (ex. “I can handle this uncertainty because I have healthy coping skills” or “I can tolerate and accept this uncertainty”).

When we lack confidence in our ability to cope with what may happen in the future, our anxiety increases. On the flip side, when we believe in our ability to cope with uncertainties in our lives, our anxiety tends to decrease while our sense of peace increases.

Reflection Questions:

Do you use healthy coping skills?

Do you feel confident in your ability to cope?

If not, what new coping skills can you add to your toolbox and how can you change your self-talk to increase your confidence in your ability to cope?

If you would like to get some more ideas on how to increase your healthy coping skills and/or improve your self-talk to increase your confidence in your ability to cope, please feel free to contact me, Mrs. Beutel, at beuteln@chsvb.org. I would be more than happy to talk with you!