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Tolerating uncertainty worksheet

Intolerance of uncertainty can be seen as an dispositional characteristic that is the result of a set of negative notions of uncertainty and its consequences. (Dugas & Robichaud, 2007) Intolerance of uncertainty involves tendency to react negatively to an emotional, cognitive, and behavioral level to uncertain situations and events. (Dugas, Buhr, & Ladouceur, 2004) Intolerance of uncertainty was first described in individuals suffering from generalized anxiety disorder (GAD). Metaphors used to describe people who are intolerant of uncertainty speak of how they can behave almost as if they were allergic to uncertainty, or as if they have a phobia of uncertainty. Many behaviors associated with GAD, such as anxiety and avoidance, can be designed as attempts to increase a sense of security. Understood in this way, concern is the attempt to look ahead and anticipate potentially negative consequences, and avoidance and adhere to what is known and certainly reduces exposure to the unknown. Unfortunately, attempts to feel better by increasing one's sense of security often result in unintended consequences. For example, trying to think ahead to anticipate difficulties can result in anxiety that feels uncontrollable and actually generates more uncertain opportunities and anxiety. Trying to stick to what is known and safe can result in feeling less safe when you inevitably encounter novelty and change. In the context of OCD, compulsive control as a strategy to increase one's sense of security actually leads to an increase in doubt (Radomsky et al, 2014). Wilkinson, Meares & Freeston (2011) describes different strategies to overcome intolerance to uncertainty. A cognitive approach is to understand an individual's beliefs and rules of uncertainty (e.g. If I go into an uncertain situation without preparing, I will not be able to cope with) and then test these with behavioral experiments. A more behavioral approach to addressing intolerance of uncertainty is to encourage customers to introduce unsafe events into their lives gradually. Through a process of exposure and habituation clients, can be helped to behave in more flexible ways. This Embracing Uncertainty exercise describes the continuum of intolerance of uncertainty, the motive for exposing themselves to unsafe situations, and suggests involving uncertainty tasks that customers may be encouraged to try. Clinicians can consider introduce this exercise in the following terms: When people find insecure situations anxiety-provoking we sometimes say they are intolerant of uncertainty. It's almost as if they have an allergic reaction to situations where they don't know what the outcome will be. In this way it's a bit like a phobia. Some people who are intolerant of uncertainty may avoid trying new activities, avoid situations they cannot control or predict. Others try to reduce uncertainty wherever they can. For example, they can find out as much as they can before they go anywhere new, order the same meal at a restaurant, or sit in the same place on a train. Does any of that sound familiar to you? A great way to psychologists has found helping people overcome fears like these is to use graduated exposure. To help someone with a phobia overcome their fear of dogs they would be gradually introduced to dogs – perhaps to pictures, then to a puppy, and then to bigger dogs. We can do a similar thing when people are intolerant of uncertainty. By gradually introducing elements of uncertainty into your life, we can help you live more of the life that you want to lead. Would you be willing to explore how we can do this together?. Intolerance of uncertainty can be seen as an dispositional characteristic that is the result of a set of negative notions of uncertainty and its consequences. (Dugas & Robichaud, 2007) Intolerance of uncertainty involves tendency to react negatively to an emotional, cognitive, and behavioral level to uncertain situations and events. (Dugas, Buhr, & Ladouceur, 2004) Uncertainty is a normal part of life – we can never be 100% sure what will happen next. Many people feel good about uncertainty and live lives where they seek excitement: they often score high on personality measures of openness to experience. Other people find uncertainty aversive, stressful, or distressing, and do not work as well in uncertain situations. They may have negative perceptions of uncertainty and may try to avoid it, or use strategies to try to control or eliminate it. Psychologists notice these reactions as intolerance of uncertainty. Common metaphors are that people who are intolerant to uncertainty behave as if they have a phobia of uncertainty, or as if they are allergic to uncertainty. Intolerance of uncertainty (IU) was first described in individuals suffering from Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD). Many behaviors associated with GAD, such as anxiety and avoidance, can be designed as attempts to increase their sense of security; anxiety is the attempt to look ahead and anticipate potentially negative consequences, avoidance and adhere to what is known and certainly reduces exposure to the unknown. Recent research has recognized intolerance of uncertainty as a transdiagnostic risk factor for many clinical conditions including anxiety, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, and eating disorders (Carleton et al, 2012; Toffolo et al, 2014; Renjan et al, 2016). Intolerance of uncertainty information handouts describes IE in the context of anxiety, and describes some of the unhelpful strategies that people high in IE tend to use to control how they feel. An important of treatment for GAD is the effort to increase the client's willingness to tolerate uncertainty, sometimes framed as the challenge of embracing uncertainty. This is a Psychology Tools information handout. Suggested uses include: Client handouts – a psycho-success resource. Discussion point – to provoke a discussion and explore your client's beliefs. Therapist learning tools - to improve your familiarity with a psychological construct. Supervision tools – to develop formulations and knowledge. Teaching resource – a teaching tool during training. Intolerance of uncertainty can be seen as an dispositional characteristic that is the result of a set of negative notions of uncertainty and its consequences. (Dugas & Robichaud, 2007) Intolerance of uncertainty involves tendency to react negatively to an emotional, cognitive, and behavioral level to uncertain situations and events. 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