

Coping in Times of Political Uncertainty

Major political change brings with it uncertainty about the present and the future. This article provides information on ways to cope with feelings of worry and stress you may be experiencing during times of political uncertainty or unrest.

How you may feel

National events affect everyday citizens in many ways. This is especially true of major changes that may be accompanied by feelings of:

- uncertainty
- insecurity
- loss of control
- worry
- anxiety
- concern about the future

You may be concerned about everything from your finances and economic future as well as the state of the nation, particularly if civil unrest—or the threat of it—is present.

How the changes may affect you

Economic worry. Experts agree that major political changes are sure to affect business, savings, taxes, investments, and real estate values, not only in Canada but also globally. Until the dust settles, it is uncertain what the change will mean for the economy.

Divided interpersonal relationships. A political change can cause division within a country and also impact personal relationships. We sometimes find ourselves on opposite sides of hard fought political battles. This can cause strain and conflict among friends, relatives, co-workers, or neighbours, not to mention strangers. It is best to steer clear of conversations about politics in professional settings, for example at work or with colleagues. It is also best to avoid discussing recent political events if this adds to your own feelings of worry or stress.

Fear about national security. In the wake of a major political change, you may have fears or worries about national or international security. Public Safety Canada expressed that “The first priority of the Government of Canada is to protect the safety and security of Canadians both at home and abroad.”

Questions and concern from your children. Children and teens may see and hear things about the crisis in the news or on social media, leading to feelings of uncertainty, anxiety and fear, which parents and caregivers need to address.

1. Make time and listen when your child wants to talk. Give children the space to tell you what they know, how they feel, and to ask you questions. They may have formed a completely different picture of the situation than you have. Take the time to listen to what they think, and what they have seen or heard.

2. Tailor the conversation to the child. Be mindful of the child’s age as you approach the conversation with them. Young children may not understand what conflict or war means and require an age-appropriate explanation. Be careful not to over-explain the situation or go into too

much detail as this can make children unnecessarily anxious. Younger children may be satisfied just by understanding that sometimes countries fight. Older children are more likely to understand what war means but may still benefit from talking with you about the situation. In fact, older children will often be more concerned by talk of war because they tend to understand the dangers better than younger children do.

3. Validate their feelings. It is important that children feel supported in the conversation. They should not feel judged or have their concerns dismissed. When children have the chance to have an open and honest conversation about things upsetting them, it can create a sense of relief and safety.

4. Reassure them that adults all over the world are working hard to resolve this. Remind children that this is not their problem to solve. They should not feel guilty about playing, seeing their friends, and doing the things that make them happy. Stay calm when you approach the conversation. Children often copy the sentiments of their caregivers—if you are uneasy about the situation, chances are your child will be uneasy as well.

5. Give them a practical way to help. Support children who want to help. Children who have the opportunity to help those affected by the conflict can feel like they are part of the solution. Children can create fundraisers, send letters to local decision-makers, or create drawings calling for peace.

Find tips from experts on how to support older kids and address their questions [here](#).

Managing fear and anxiety

Major political change can leave us feeling anxious or worried about things over which we have little control. Here are some ways to effectively manage these feelings:

1. Stay informed. Rely on credible and trustworthy sources of information for news updates, guidance, and advice.

2. Avoid the rumor mill.

3. Take a break from social media. During times of political, social, and cultural change, social media is full of people posting opinions, articles, conspiracies, petitions, disagreements, and misinformation. Avoiding social media gives you space to process your own thoughts and feelings without being influenced by others.

4. Be aware that there may be public demonstrations.

5. Strive for unity, compassion, and kindness. Unfortunately, during times of uncertainty, reports of hate crimes and verbal abuse are not uncommon. The more compassion and understanding you are able to exhibit toward others—friends and strangers alike—the less tension-filled the world will be.

5. Do the things you would normally do during difficult times to manage feelings of stress and anxiety. Make a point of eating well-balanced meals. Limit or avoid alcohol and caffeine. Drink plenty of water—stress can sometimes lead to dehydration. Make regular physical activity a priority. Regular exercise is one of the best ways to reduce stress and improve your mood.

6. Take breaks. Go for a walk. Get some fresh air. Practice deep breathing or meditation.

7. Connect with friends and family. You'll probably find that other people are just as worried as you are about the same or similar things. Talking things over helps relieve stress.

Seek professional help

Many professionals are available to offer help during stressful times, including psychologists, social workers, financial counsellors, and more. Contact your organization's assistance program for additional help or support.

Canada:

- Call 1-877-847-4525
- Email support@resourcesforyourlife.com
- Visit <http://ca.resourcesforyourlife.com> COMPANY CODE: BMWCare
- Download the "ICONNECT YOU" app from the App Store or Google Play PASSCODE: 149301

US:

- Call 1-800-466-8282
- Visit www.AlternativesEAP.com
- Access Code 8282
- Download the 'Alternative EAP' app from the App Store or Google Play

You can also view the following pre-recorded webinar called ***Remaining Resilient During a Crisis*** which will help you understand the impact of traumatic events and situations, recognize the impact that trauma can have on you, understand the impact of uncertainty, and build on your internal resilience during a crisis. The webinar is available in English and Ukrainian.

Access the English version [here](#).

Access the Ukrainian version [here](#).