



What if it happens? Uncertainty will and is happening.

Six months into the Trump administration, and for me, it feels like I'm going through COVID again. This time, I am more prepared; there is less of a free-fall feeling and more intentionality. I am doubling down on who I am. Reaching out to past clients, saying yes to lots of different kinds of projects, serving and supporting others, and of course, research!

I recently sent out a survey to all of my social media channels, newsletter subscribers, and followers, and simply asked two questions:

- 🎯 **What is your biggest source of uncertainty right now, in your professional life?**
- 🎯 **What is your biggest source of uncertainty right now, in your personal life?**

To potentially bring some certainty to these uncertain times, I want to share the patterns of anxiety, fear, worry, and concern that make up uncertainty. Ideally, I would like to encourage you to accept the following:

- 1. You aren't alone. Being in community with others will help them feel better, which will make you feel better.**
- 2. Uncertainty is certain. We need to normalize the unknown because the unknown is knowable not in its content, but in that it is a common experience.**
- 3. I also encourage you to define your concept of responsibility and agency. Who do you feel responsible for, and what do you do with your agency inside that self-defined realm of influence?**

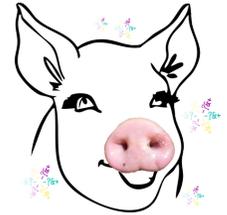


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The patterns of responses fell into fairly predictable categories after conducting a content analysis and qualitative review of the open-ended answers. You will fit right in with the rest of us. Even more interestingly, you are likely to fall into these patterns regardless of your political involvement. Fascinating.

An overarching tone of urgency pervaded all the responses, which could be attributed to the wording of the questions (asking for the most significant sources of uncertainty). Some of the responses were so heartbreaking that I want to list them here before moving on to the main patterns or groupings of reactions.

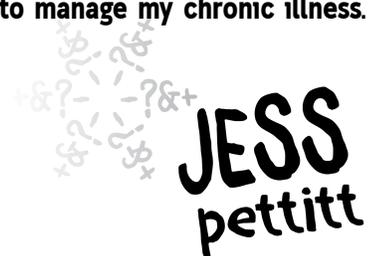
- ⊙ **Deciding to grow our family.**
- ⊙ **The safety of my town.**
- ⊙ **Will my son with an IEP [individual education plan] be able to get an education?**
- ⊙ **Should I downsize my house?**
- ⊙ **That I am alone.**
- ⊙ **In feeling that each area of my life is only getting 70% of what it needs from me to maintain it, which area is going to crumble first?**
- ⊙ **The influence that "political uncertainty" has on corporate decisions. We are constantly wondering how the - insert issue HERE- will affect our business decisions.**



The first overarching pattern involves Healthcare and its inherent uncertainty. Ironically, no one's health is certain, and we are at best temporarily able-bodied, but top-of-mind access to healthcare is a genuine concern. Some of the connections about plans that may need to change, and how those unexpected changes or the timing of those changes could lead to suffering. Participants nearing retirement or those relying on Social Security, Medicare, or Medicaid shared their perspectives, as did individuals who were recently married, beginning a family planning journey, or raising children.

This is an excellent example of what I mean when I talk about building up the muscle strength to recognize problems we don't experience as problems. I don't have children, never wanted any, and I'm 15 years away from even thinking about retirement. I don't have parents or in-laws to care for, and yet, access to healthcare is a concern for many. Hormone replacement therapy for me post-hysterectomy, preventative care related to my undiagnosed heart condition and cancer risk, dental and eye care, and the like are certainly services I am grateful for having access to, and I need to notice my sense of entitlement to these appointments. I can use this as a platform to empathize with those who are losing and genuinely fear losing a service that can be life-saving. The key element of the responses regarding health care was the word "if" if existing care will still be accessible, when care will be needed in the future, and if uncertainty itself will lead to more health concerns as yet another source of the unknown.

- ⊙ **As I plan for retirement, the "unknown" for health care is real.**
- ⊙ **My health and whether I will continue to have healthcare and access to SSDI.**
- ⊙ **I don't know if I'll be able to afford insurance or the medical treatments I need to manage my chronic illness.**
- ⊙ **Since I am not working, it is difficult to make ends meet without help.**
- ⊙ **My health.**
- ⊙ **Healthy aging is currently good, but subject to change.**



- ⊙ **When will health issues become my primary focus? How many good years do I have left?**
- ⊙ **I am retired, so SS is my biggest fear, a source of insecurity.**
- ⊙ **Whether I can stay in business, given the replacement of many core capabilities by AI, along with new costs associated with insurance and security.**

At least from a US perspective, concerns about access to healthcare directly lead to overall financial uncertainty. Money can refer to savings or retirement investments, living wages, costs, and overall expenses, among other things, and is a strong pattern that impacts participants' anxiety around uncertainty.

No amount of forecasting, risk planning, or plain old saving can prepare us for the unknown financial future, let alone our circumstances and what we will and won't need in a given moment, although it can come close. Participants named debt as often as savings, and discussed past spending and future safety nets. No one knows - the only known is the unknown, and that can be normalized or at least made more comfortable. We cannot account for who and how our life will surprise us, and we can do the best we can with what we have, some of the time. Ideally, we can use our past choices to predict future decisions, as this will serve as a helpful reference point; however, we can only be certain that we are uncertain about our future choices.

- ⊙ **Not being able to be as present with my kids and family, and being able to provide for them.**
- ⊙ **Paying off debts. Repaying debt and making enough money to make that happen.**
- ⊙ **What if I lose my job AGAIN because of this administration? My previous role involved implementing the Affordable Care Act.**
- ⊙ **Accepting the fact that I am no longer the breadwinner and struggling with uncertainty in my career.**
- ⊙ **Will I have enough money to live?**
- ⊙ **Whether we can retire when we thought we could.**
- ⊙ **The economy - people are hesitant to spend \$\$ now**
- ⊙ **Whether my industry will collapse over the last 3 years.**
- ⊙ **Will I still be in business a year from now?**
- ⊙ **The Company I have worked for over 30 years is filing for bankruptcy. I am looking at a forced career change at 53 years old.**
- ⊙ **Layoffs (prior PTSD).**
- ⊙ **Future clients and revenue.**
- ⊙ **The economy can have a significant impact on my industry. I also do cross-border work that is being impacted by the tariff situation.**
- ⊙ **My organization relies heavily on Medicaid dollars. If Medicaid is cut, will the folks we serve still get support?**
- ⊙ **Funding from both the state and federal governments. Will our School District stay true to our mission? Will funding cuts occur, and if so, how will they impact the services and staffing levels we currently have, and therefore affect the students in our district?**
- ⊙ **Continued change at my organization, especially at this stage of my career (about 6 years from retirement).**
- ⊙ **Losing my primary source of income.**
- ⊙ **The industry is shifting so much, and I may have aged out; trends are move kids. trends are moving at lightning speed. I have kids. It's terrifying.**
- ⊙ **Worrying about what kind of world my kid is going to live in when he's a grownup.**



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Perhaps I am an idealist, but I anticipated participants' responses to be about large-scale fears that are outside of our control. Past research has pointed to war, genocide, climate change, access to water and clean air, nuclear proliferation, or ideological issues like hate, greed, waste, and the like. At this point in our lives, it is the scale of responsibility and our sense of (or lack of) agency within that scale that seems to be the strongest source of uncertainty.

Some responded that the source of their fears was the well-being of humanity. Large-scale populous impact is top of mind for many. When considering all people, I would first ask you to truly question whether you mean all people or all people like you. Both patterns appear in discourse, albeit from the [Heritage Foundation in Project 2025](#) or in individual responses to my survey.

The most significant scale issues that came up are the Trump Administration's Executive Orders and other directives, and the direct impact on:

- ⊙ **Global protections, services, supplies, relationships, and advocacy.**
- ⊙ **Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.**
- ⊙ **Impact of freedom, health, and quality of life.**
- ⊙ **Long-term implications of chaos on the world we live in, as we know it.**



Pairing both lack of control and big fears, and we have to talk about "them." I often talk about 'us' and 'them.' It is a grammatical game because everyone in my US group is their THEM group. Everyone not in my US group is my THEM group. We all have a 'them' - the members of the THEM group that cause us the most fear are outside of our control, and that is a significant source of uncertainty. This is understandable, but it isn't helpful. Instead of grouping our fear to a THEM group, we need to name the actual systems at play, racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, homo/bi/transphobia, and the like are the systems of oppression that evaluate the worth of a human life differently from others. We are unable to participate in this process. We must actively work towards shifting our unconscious biases to more conscious behaviors and responses, rather than reacting out of habit or comfort.

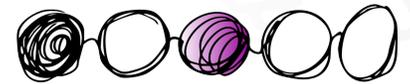
- ⊙ **Will the white people in my community turn on me? Do I have to protect my family?**
- ⊙ **In my professional life, I work in a controversial area. I'm slightly afraid to openly talk now (about my work) because of the potential backlash that could be aggressive or harmful, and then later dismissed.**
- ⊙ **Programs and projects will not receive any federal funding or support, and as a result, those who would benefit from these programs and projects will be left without them.**
- ⊙ **Continued funding and legally protected discrimination against my orientation/gender expression and disability.**
- ⊙ **Being valued as an employee or quietly fired, dismissed, ignored, or worse, tolerated.**

It's truly an honor to collect participants' deepest fears. Thank you for trusting me with that. Discovering the sources of these shared fears is just as powerful as connecting people, so that we don't feel alone in our fears. When at our lowest points, we must remember to support others. If you're sad, try to find someone else and help improve their mood; in turn, your mood will improve. Find someone alone and spend time with them to alleviate your feelings of loneliness. It works, and we often forget the power of supporting the people in our lives, or even those within our reach.

- ⊙ **Will my life be legislated out of existence as a trans person? What are all the things that could be lost in that, financially and security for my family at the heart of it!**

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- ⊙ **Raising kids in this crazy technology world! Where to draw boundaries? What should I let slide?**
- ⊙ **Will my spouse and I continue to be safe as the current regime unfolds?**
- ⊙ **I have a son who is active military, do I need to worry that the leadership in DC might start WWII?**
- ⊙ **My husband works in Education; Will his contract be renewed if cuts continue to be made? Will he get a new job at this point? Will we have insurance? Will we lose the house? How will our children go to college without the tuition benefit?**
- ⊙ **I am in the process of obtaining a visa so that my family can join me in the UK, as we are currently split between two countries due to work and family commitments.**
- ⊙ **My wife is originally from the Basque Country, and we will be traveling this summer with our 5-year-old daughter. While we are all US citizens at this point, we are fearful and uncertain about how our re-entry into the US will go.**
- ⊙ **Safety - mine and my biracial daughters. As three women collectively, the world feels a bit scary right now. For them, although I am their mom, the world will forever see them as Black women. That's terrifying right now.**
- ⊙ **Ability to maintain relationships with friends and family members, as the last few months have revealed significant differences in values.**
- ⊙ **I'm retiring in 4 days!! I worry about the economy and losing investments that are meant to supplement my pension income. The things that I used to value and find joy in, I somewhat fear now...air travel, crowded concerts, or other events.**
- ⊙ **The ability to finish the surgery regimen at the VA as a trans veteran**
- ⊙ **Concern about personal safety with the current political climate.**



Let's take this time to reflect on what we are fearful of and see if there is a way we can offer support to others around the exact source of uncertainty. We can not know, nor are we entitled to know, what other people are going through. We can, however, get comfortable not knowing everything. We are not entitled to any information. Moreover, we also shift, cover, and mask as we navigate the world, so it shouldn't be too big of a lift to assume everyone else is as well.

Uncertainty is as sure as complexity is complex. We have had enough life experience to draw upon from our past and respond accordingly, even to the unknown. One of the best lessons the spring of 2020 taught us was how to pivot and make educated guesses based on best practices and limited information. Within days, business as usual had changed across the globe because of COVID-19. Disability advocates had been asking for remote work accommodations for decades, and suddenly, it became the norm. Essential employees were required to report to work, and the conversation about a living wage was reignited. Collectively, we accommodate change as much as we question it, and this is the foundation for the uncertainty we are fearing currently.

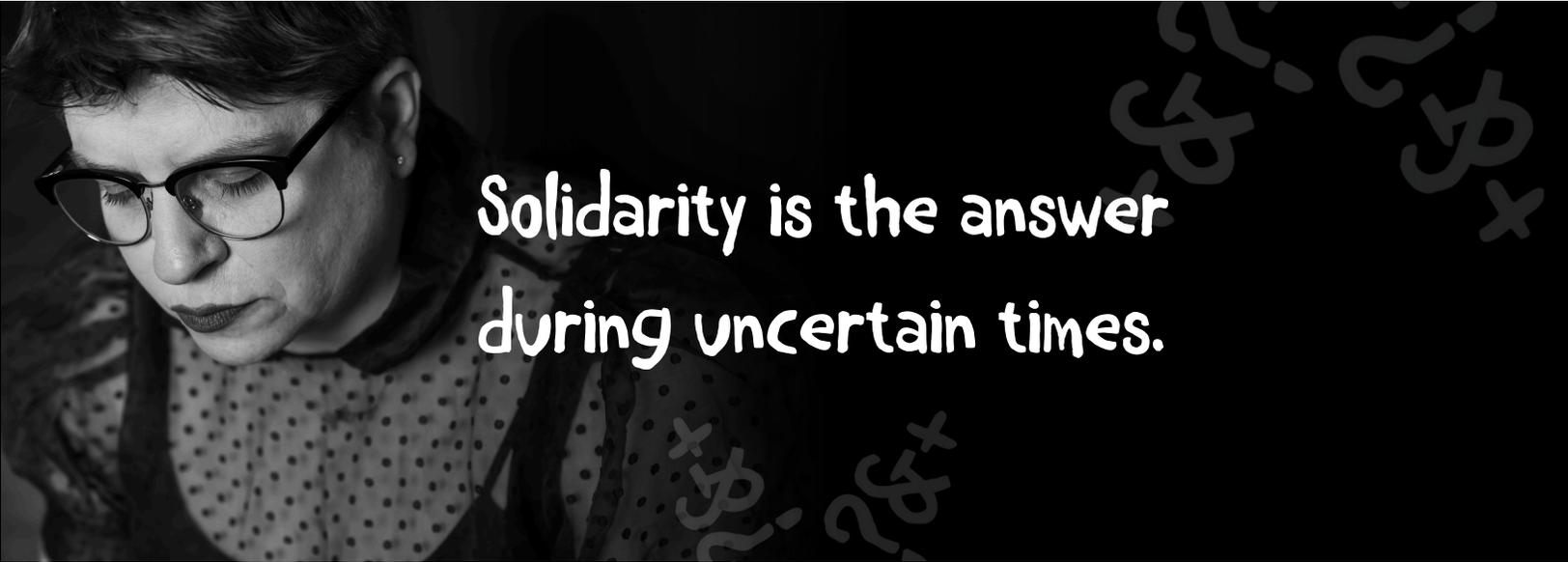
We can cultivate our sense of curiosity, generosity, authenticity, and vulnerability, and support those we come into contact with, so that in return, we can feel more connected. Embracing our fears and leaning into the complexity that confuses our sense of certainty. We are all our own stories, and every sentence uttered has a history behind it. Can we provide enough stability to heal our fears?

One more recommendation: my friend has created a three-question survey that you can take in seconds and feel seen and connected. Perhaps that is the support you need to get started supporting others. [AllOfYou.io](https://allofyou.io) is the link. Please join in and share with curiosity.

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We cannot be anxious while curious, and we all deserve a moment to exhale and join in community with others. If anything is particular, it is that we will get through whatever it is together.

Register for FREE webinars that cover my research and working with my new keynote! What if it happens? Register here: <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/Tvd2gKGfTSiGZgu9BrYrXw>



Solidarity is the answer
during uncertain times.



let's talk!



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