

The LAUNCH Podcast - Embracing Uncertainty with Dr. Rebecca Acabchuk

[00:00:00] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:00:00] Hey everyone. Welcome to another episode of The LAUNCH Podcast. This is Kayla Hogrefe, academic advisor for the UConn School of Business on the Hartford campus,

[00:00:17] **Emma Bjorngard-Basayne:** [00:00:17] and I'm Emma Bjorngard-Basayne, academic advisor at the Stamford campus.

[00:00:21] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:00:21] And this is an unexpected release of a new podcast episode that Emma and I decided we wanted to send out today. We are all at home studying and working and living our lives. What did you say?

[00:00:38] **Emma Bjorngard-Basayne:** [00:00:38] Hanging out with our pets,

[00:00:39] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:00:39] hanging out with our pets in a in a completely new way. The world looks very different than it did even just a week ago, and we just wanted to get in touch with all the students out there that listened to us because we want to help you manage maybe some stress and anxiety and uncertainty and work through some of those feelings and sentiments and let you know that you're [00:01:00] supported by UConn staff. And not just our staff, not just me and Emma or our advising staff, but the whole university community, is really wanting to band together to make sure that students feel supported and taken care of.

[00:01:13] **Emma Bjorngard-Basayne:** [00:01:13] Definitely. And I don't know. I just, from a personal perspective, I didn't even at first realize that I was feeling stressed, but then kind of as the days went by, I was just starting to feel like more and more tired. And it just took me a minute to reflect on, this is coming from so many changes going on and I'm just trying to adjust for like, what's to come. Like cause you, you know, you feel a sense of uncertainty throughout this time. Is that something that. You identify with too?

[00:01:42] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:01:42] Definitely. And I know many of us are having quite understandable experiences of fear and anxiety and concern. And so meditation and mindfulness can be really valuable allies for us at times like this.

[00:01:55] Of course, they're not going to necessarily protect you from viruses or things like [00:02:00] that, but they can help you feel more free from panic, and be more in touch with yourself and with your sense of resilience. And so Emma and I got back in touch with Dr. Becky Acabchuk. If you remember from one of our earlier episodes.

[00:02:13] She gave us a lot of really helpful, useful information about meditation and mindfulness. she is the researcher with the UConn psychology department who has done quite a bit of work in the areas of mindfulness and meditation and its effect on students. So we asked Becky to send us a recording because we can't all be together in person together, unfortunately, but she was so kind enough to send us a recording of a, of a meditation that she wanted to lead for our listeners so that listeners can follow along, and helpful, hopefully use it as a resource to feel more centered and help manage their stress at this time.

[00:02:52] **Emma Bjorngard-Basayne:** [00:02:52] And she talks a little bit, before she gets into the guided meditation. you know, just about how to deal with uncertain [00:03:00] times and you know, your ability to do so. so let's listen to what she has to say.

[00:03:15] **Becky Acabchuk:** [00:03:15] Hey, welcome. My name is Becky Acabchuk. I am a researcher at UConn, and my work focuses on health, behavior change in the mental and physical benefits of yoga and meditation. So thank you so much for joining me. I'm going to talk to you a little bit about uncertainty and then lead us into a guided meditation.

[00:03:39] But I'd like to encourage you now to get comfortable. So if you're sitting maybe putting two feet flat on the floor, sitting up to all adjusting your posture. Closing your eyes and just settling in, maybe taking a few deep breaths [00:04:00] and fully settling into your body at this time of deep uncertainty. So I've been using the word roller coaster lately to describe this time that we're in.

[00:04:16] Like in the sense of almost like a roller coaster in the dark, like you don't know when the next turn is going to be. You don't know when the next drop is going to be. but it certainly does feel like a roller coaster ride that we're on right now. And in that brings about feelings of deep uncertainty, which made me think about what employees really look for when they're hiring people.

[00:04:39] And in the past, employees looked for intelligence IQ. That was like, you know, the number that you can measure to look for somebody that's going to be really productive. But then IQ got replaced with emotional intelligence. Because employers realized that IQ wasn't necessarily [00:05:00] enough that we needed an emotional intelligence to, to be productive workers.

[00:05:05]but the latest skill that is really sought after by employees is adaptability. And you could see why adaptability might be the hot new skill right now, especially at times like this when we're on this roller coaster ride. But the idea of adaptability being a skill implies that it can be learned. It can be strengthened with practice, but you don't have to feel like you would.

[00:05:27] We're born adaptable. So what does it mean to be adaptable? Well, one way to look at it is that it means accepting uncertainty. So when certainty for a lot of people leads to high levels of anxiety, right? Because if you're not certain about what's going to happen in the future, then. You know, we tend to think of all these scenarios and catastrophize and you know, are get into all of these negative thinking patterns, but we can also let go of the [00:06:00] need to feel certain, to practice, just embracing uncertainty.

[00:06:05] And that. Well, lean to feeling less anxious. We don't need to control the future. Really. The idea of controlling the future is just an illusion anyway, right? But we could focus on what we can control right now. So right now, I am safe right now. I can take deep breaths right now. I could sit up tall right now.

[00:06:36] I could soften my shoulders and relax my face. Feel yourself relaxing your face right now. Feel the tension dissolving right now.

[00:06:52] Focusing on right now helps relieve feelings of anxiety [00:07:00] that stem from uncertainty of the future. Focusing on right now,

[00:07:11] focusing on deepening the breath right now inside of the body,

[00:07:19] and we could also focus on embracing change to become more adaptable. Knowing that everything is constantly changing. Noticing the constant changes of sensation in the body right now by focusing on the feelings and the fingertips.

[00:07:44] Mm. Maybe noticing any pulsing or warming or tingling or cold and the fingertips.

[00:07:58] feeling yourself connected to [00:08:00] the ground right now where you're sitting

[00:08:06] and just notice any sensations in the body that are strongest right now. Where do you feel the strongest sensation in your body right now?

[00:08:17] And notice how those sensations are constantly changing. Pain is temporary. Nature reminds us of constant change. Nature reminds us to embrace change as just part of the cycle.

[00:08:44] Embracing the feelings of changing sensations in your body right now with each breath. Feeling. One breath in and one breath out. Slowing down the [00:09:00] breath to help soothe the nervous system. Coming back into balance.

[00:09:13] feeling yourself become more and more absorbed by this moment right now.

[00:09:23] As if the past in the future, we're just dissolving.

[00:09:30] Feel yourself syncing all the sensations in your body.

[00:09:43] Maybe noticing the sounds around you.

[00:09:50] Not good, not bad, not labeling them, but just accepting,

[00:09:58] embracing [00:10:00] whatever it is that is

[00:10:06] embracing what is,

[00:10:13] we are all connected. Recognizing this feeling of interconnectivity as human beings on this giant cruise ship called planet. We all share a common desire to be healthy and to be free of suffering. We all want our loved ones to be healthy and free of suffering. We need to take care of one another because we are all connected.

[00:10:50] Syncing this feeling of interconnectivity,

[00:10:57] embracing change

[00:11:04] [00:11:00] and practice, feeling comfortable with uncertainty.

[00:11:11] Because we are adaptable.

[00:11:18] Thank you so much for joining me today. Best of luck to you. May you be happy, may you be healthy, and may you be at peace.

[00:11:37] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:11:37] Thank you for joining us and for listening to Dr. Becky Acabchuk lead us through this meditation exercise. she gave us some really good food for thought in terms of managing anxiety and letting go of needing to feel in control. I just think it's so important for students to hear at this time of great uncertainty and anxiety about what's going to happen, what the what [00:12:00] the rest of our lives they're going to look like for the next few months here.

[00:12:02] **Emma Bjorngard-Basayne:** [00:12:02] Yeah, definitely. I am going to be listening to that guided meditation all the time I think. So we also just wanted to say before. Before we end that we want you to be on the lookout for another podcast episode on how to, you know, be strategic about your, or around your online learning. So there'll be some tips and tricks for students about how to be a successful online so keep an eye out for that.

[00:12:28] **Kayla Hogrefe:** [00:12:28] Thanks everyone. Bye.