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How to thrive in uncertain world

Even before Covid-19, we lived in a rapidly-changing world. This UCC book will help you navigate it

UNCERTAINTY is currently a hot topic, especially with the Covid-19 pandemic, but it has been an increasingly large part of life for some time.

As our societies have become more complex, the level of uncertainty has increased and people find they have to deal with fast-changing, rapidly-evolving situations and circumstances which do not fit their previous experience, where planning is difficult and where the outcomes are uncertain.

The unexpected has become the norm.

It can be difficult to know how best to deal with this increasingly uncertain world. Uncertainty can give rise to a myriad of emotions, ranging from excitement to defensiveness, anxiety and depression. We generally try our best to reduce it, focusing on protecting ourselves from anxiety rather than looking for long term sustainable solutions to the complex challenges we face, or making the most of the opportunities that uncertainty brings.

This book explores the role uncertainty plays in everyone's life; what it is; how it impacts and how to deal with it. It outlines how we can all, when faced with uncertainty and change, adapt to and adopt strategies designed to help us navigate our way through uncertain times.

It starts by explaining why uncertainty has increased, the challenges this brings, and why it is likely to continue to be a feature of all our lives over the 21st century.

Drawing on the analogy of navigating through mountainous terrain, it describes an original, straightforward, logical, and proactive way of dealing with uncertainty that helps people take personal responsibility and think more

positively. It concludes by looking at the broader implications for individuals, organisations and society.

The book looks at uncertainty from a psychological perspective. Logical approaches, based on systems thinking, can provide a useful way of analysing systems in terms of degrees of complexity.

However, they are less helpful in understanding the impact of uncertainty on behaviours and individual responses. Psychological approaches, on the other hand, focus on our experience of uncertainty and how we feel and think about it. It describes five psychological strategies for behaving and acting that people use in times of uncertainty:

■ **Defensive;** this strategy is used most often as it is the default position, protecting us from the impact of uncertainty. It involves a form of "battening down the hatches" and hoping it will all go away.

■ **Accepting;** with this strategy we tend to accept that much of what is happening is outside our control. Instead of focussing on things we can do nothing about, we can focus instead on what we can control

■ **Disrupting;** this strategy can be used responsibly or irresponsibly to "shake things up" if they are stuck or where the status quo needs to be challenged. Used responsibly, it can create major shifts in habits that are no longer helpful. Used irresponsibly it can give rise to anarchy.

■ **Exploring;** this is a more scientific approach. It works well where there is time to seek out the evidence, try out options and make informed decisions on the way forward. It can be less useful when resources are limited and time is



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of the essence.

■ **Imposing:** this strategy uses power and influence to take control and impose actions and solutions on the situation. It can be appropriate in a crisis but its downside is dictatorship and autocracy.

The book then outlines a four-step approach — The Richmor Model — that combines these psychological strategies along with insights from systems theory into a practical approach that people can use for dealing with uncertainty. The steps are:

- Making time to think & reflect
- Thinking strategically
- Exploring and experimenting
- Acting decisively

The book draws on professional international experience in organisation and leadership de-

velopment to provide an eclectic mix of ideas, research, illustrations, quotations, practical examples, vignettes from history, metaphors, motivational stories, lines of poetry and personal examples to support its approach.

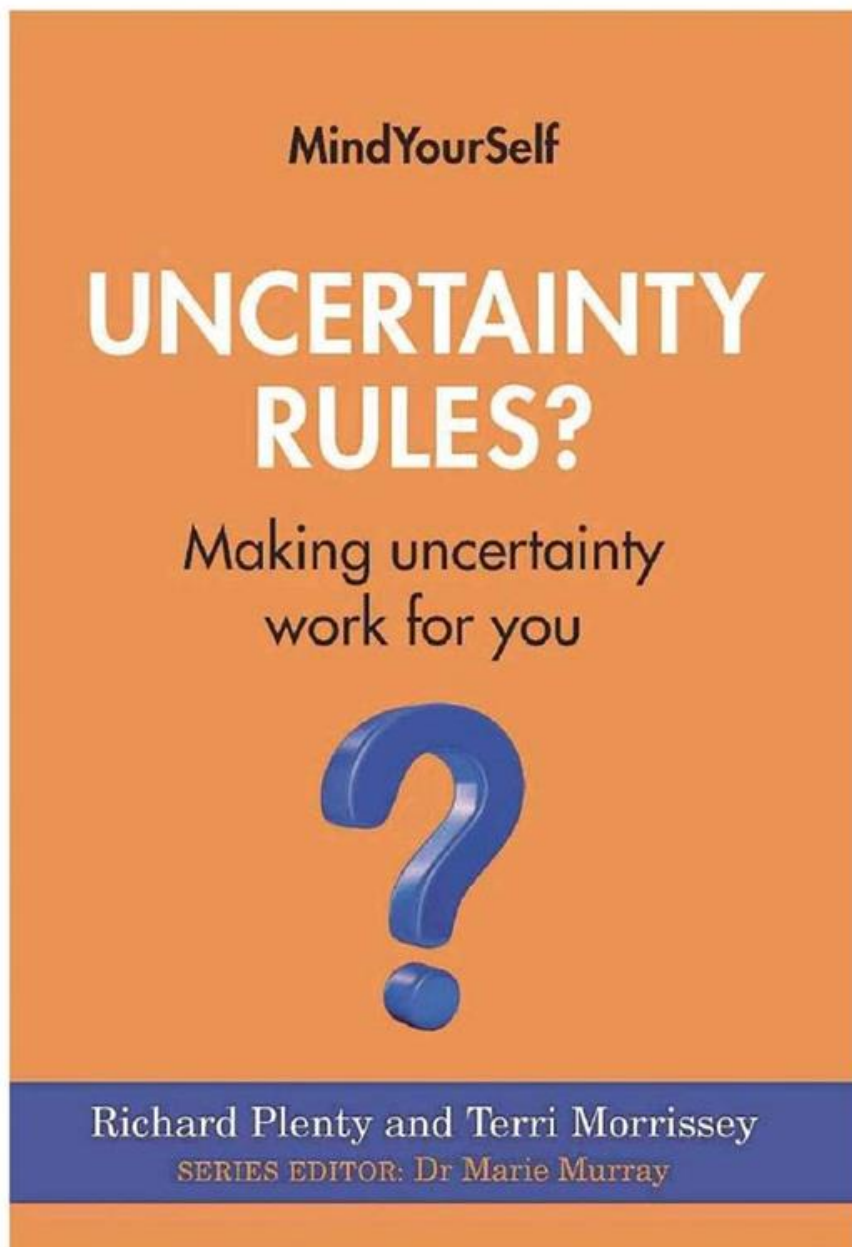
It takes the view that that uncertainty is inevitable, and the real challenge is not just how to cope with it but how to deal with it head-on and make the most of the opportunities that uncertainty brings.

Rather than prescribing a set of rigid rules for how people should live their lives, this approach helps people to find their own unique solutions to specific situations.

■ *Uncertainty Rules? Making Uncertainty Work for You*, by Richard Plenty and Terri Morrissey published by Cork University Press, MindYourSelf series. Available now.



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