

THE MILLENIUM MENTAL TOOLKIT:
SKILLSETS TO NAVIGATE THE AGE OF UNCERTAINTY

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In the wake of recent world developments, the world seems to be less secure, relationships and family are more fragile and precious, and life itself more meaningful as its certainty is challenged. It seems that on the individual psychological level there are a number of skillsets or paradigms of thinking that might be helpful in reducing anxiety and increasing enjoyment of life as we navigate through the tracks and troughs of the information age.

The Wisdom of Insecurity. Life is not controllable. However, it is manageable. Assuming and hoping that that control over life can be complete has been a prescription for failure for generations of individuals and world leaders. The more the unexpected occurs, the worse the anxiety and compulsive attempts to quell it becomes. Instead, accept that we can manage and cope with change, provided we margin extra latitude for the unexpected. Examples are contingency funds, rainy day accounts, and most importantly, free unscheduled time for ourselves and our loved ones every day.

Qualified Knowledge Sampling. Accept the idea that, with the possible exception of mathematics and some other classical studies, there is no such thing as a complete information set. That is, even when we are completing a study of information, it has already been outdated by new data on the same or similar subjects. The suggested alternative is critical reasoning and research skills in collecting and weighting information samples. Qualify your sources of information, especially if you are using Internet searches as your primary research tool.

Constructed Reality. The principle of relativity has changed our notion of Reality. Reality is changed by the very processes and perspectives of our observation and consideration of its meaning. We are beginning to understand that Reality is largely a construction of our language and the process of consensus in social living. Thus, there are implications for social justice and

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ethics in our global biotechnical world. Our understanding of our complex interdependence is crucial to peace on global, local, and even personal levels.

Cognitive Flexibility and Creativity. Including both linear and lateral thinking in problem solving requires cognitive flexibility. We need to train ourselves to develop then exceed models of understanding, to think inside the box, then to think outside the box, to develop creative solutions to complex problems.

Win-win Solutions based on Systemic Interdependence. The Myth of Independence has been effectively weakened even in North America. Increasingly, we are reminded that we are interdependent with the human family. We need to develop skills of empathy, to understand the dilemma from the other person or other culture perspective before attempting a solution.

Building and Maintaining Family Structures and Support Networks. Real life tragedies and threats bring home the need for emotional and instrumental support to survive and thrive in our world. This year more than ever people are rediscovering the importance of family relationships, friendship groups, business networks, and community connectedness. We are increasingly reminded of the importance of getting to know our neighbors as a source of support and early warning of possible disjunction or alienation.

Provisional Reality. Although life is uncertain, this does not mean that we have to act and think distrustfully. A proposed alternative is to live committed to reality as a platform that is dynamic and changing as we negotiate our balance upon it.

Managing the Expectation Gradient. Travel with hope. Arrive with gratitude for your blessings. Although pain may be inevitable, suffering may be optional.
