What to do when...
You are finding it hard to cope with change and uncertainty

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5 Key Messages

1. Remember that uncertainty is a normal part of life
2. It might not be possible or helpful to get rid of uncertainty
3. Try not to avoid uncertainty altogether
4. Focus on what you are doing right now and on things you enjoy
5. Make a set worry time

1.Remember that uncertainty is a normal part of life

We have all experienced a lot of uncertainty during the pandemic, but it is important to remember that uncertainty is always a part of life.

Just because uncertainty is a part of life, it doesn't mean that anyone's struggles with it are not important or that nothing can be done.

It is really normal to find it difficult to make decisions when things are uncertain, or to feel negative emotions when things are uncertain

For example feeling upset, frustrated, uncomfortable.

2. It might not be possible or helpful to get rid of uncertainty

A lot of changes due to the pandemic are out of most people's control (e.g. restrictions), **but there are also a lot of things in normal life that are outside of your control** (e.g. traffic).

Although lots of things can't be controlled, it can help to think about what can be controlled

For example daily routines like eating, sleeping. Or activities like doing homework, making a playlist, connecting with friends.

Instead of trying to control everything, work on feeling okay with uncertainty where there is nothing you can do about it.

Being okay with uncertainty is a great life skill to work on.

3.Try not to avoid uncertainty altogether

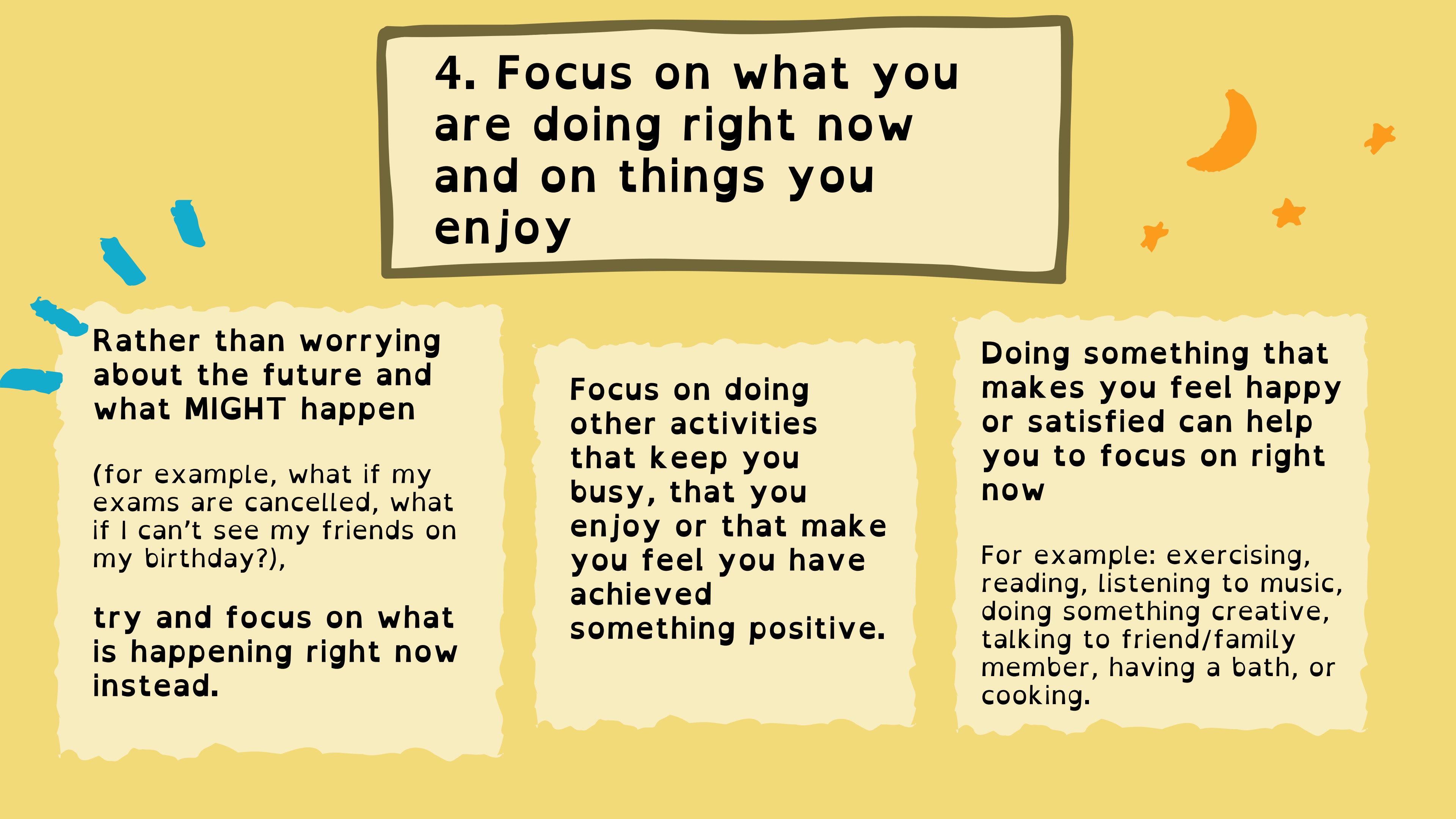Everyone is different, and it is important to try out uncertainty at your own pace.

It is normal to want to avoid uncertainty, but it is good to try to experience it and to have the opportunity to cope with it.

Spending a lot of time trying to get rid of uncertainty (e.g. by talking about your worries, checking a lot for news updates, or asking for a lot of reassurance **can make you feel better in the short term, but make things <u>more difficult</u> in the long run.**

Pushing your boundaries can give you an opportunity to see that you CAN cope with uncertainty, as well as having a chance to discover that uncertainty might not always lead to a bad outcome It can be exciting to try something new and unfamiliar.

4. Focus on what you are doing right now and on things you enjoy

Rather than worrying about the future and what MIGHT happen

(for example, what if my exams are cancelled, what if I can't see my friends on my birthday?),

try and focus on what is happening right now instead.

Focus on doing other activities that keep you busy, that you enjoy or that make you feel you have achieved something positive.

Doing something that makes you feel happy or satisfied can help you to focus on right now

For example: exercising, reading, listening to music, doing something creative, talking to friend/family member, having a bath, or cooking.

5. Make a set 'worry time'

Making a 'worry time' can be helpful for managing uncertainty and worry more generally.

This means having a set time each day (well before bedtime) to sit down for a short time to talk or think through any worries. You can focus on possible ways to deal with them.

At night, if you start to worry about the future, you could try doing a quiet activity

For example reading a fiction book. Keep a notepad by your bed to note down any worries which come up at night-time, so you can put these out of your mind until a set 'worry time'.

If your worries are about day to day problems, it can be helpful to try and problem-solve possible solutions and create a plan of action for them.

For example, creating a revision timetable to help manage exam worries.

What should someone do if they are struggling with their mental health?

- **If anyone is struggling at a level where it is getting in the way of daily life** (e.g., causing distress, interfering with sleep, schoolwork, concentrating in lessons, socialising with friends), **it is important to seek help.**

- **This could be talking to a trusted friend or family member. Often a good starting point is to speak to someone at school** (a school nurse, school mental health champion); **this information can typically be found on the school website or by asking a form tutor.**

- **Another option is to speak to a health professional, e.g., GP.**

- **More information on sources of support (and other useful resources) can be found here:**

https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/youth-mental-health/