GROWERTALKS

Growers Talk Business

4/1/2025

How to Be Uncertain

Art Parkerson



I sell 30% of my plants to customers in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, so when I see headlines like, “Is D.C. the new Detroit?” with estimates that the “D.C. economy could take a 40% hit” from the new administration’s policy changes, it makes me wonder.

What’s going to happen?

I know this is an important question because I feel it in my chest. You know that knot in your gut? It doesn’t feel good. When my thinking suddenly turns to feeling, that needs to be addressed. It’s never a good idea to let my feelings take the wheel.

Here are some ways I deal with uncertainty so that it doesn’t morph into anxiety. This is what I tell myself:

Uncertainty is safer than certainty. It’s not what you worry about that really hurts you, it’s the things you don’t worry about. The things you assume and take for granted are the things that can kill you. Don’t despise the uncertainty. It’s healthy. It might not feel like it, but it’s a safe space. I know I’ve said, “It’s not that bad things can happen, it’s the not knowing that bothers me.” Uncertainty stinks, but if I’m rational I have to admit that uncertainty is better than certain doom.

Imagine doom is certain. I find it helps to face the unknown dead-on and play out what would happen if everything goes as bad as it possibly could. Be careful here. Don’t overdo it. Depending on how your mind works, this could get really dark. Don’t be vague about it. It doesn’t help to think that way. Try to get to a worst-case scenario number. What will I do if we have $3 million less in sales?

Don’t gamble with more than you’re willing to lose. Don’t be foolish. Don’t bet the farm. If that number is too big, I might need more help than a GrowerTalks article about positive thinking.

Remember the past. I’ve been through tough times before. It wasn’t fun, but it wasn’t as bad as I thought it was going to be. I might not like it, but it gives me confidence that we can do it again if we need to.

Project confidence and positivity. People are watching me. I’m supposed to lead. This is just another problem to deal with. It’s part of your job description. Don’t panic, but don’t be arrogant, either. Act like you know what you’re doing, but also stay humble. Never tell your team, “I’m scared.”

Tell someone that you’re scared. Me? I start with Jesus. But I also have a friend named John. He does a bit of

work for me, so he knows me and my business inside out. But he isn't part of the "day-to-day." Call him an advisor. I can tell him anything. He never freaks out. He never gossips. He's mature and wise. If you don't have that person—outside your core team—then you need to find them. (My email's at the bottom of this article, BTW.) It's crucial that I get out of my own head at some point. I must speak it out loud because—try as I might—I can't truly mentor myself.

Avoid the noise. Stop scrolling. Don't watch the news. I don't need blow-by-blow details. That's like Chinese water torture. Drip. Drip. Drip. Maybe I should "be informed." I get that. It feels foolish to be ignorant. Read articles; ignore headlines. Gather facts, not opinions.

Do some manual labor. Get out in the plants and don't just walk around. Dig in. Spend a morning with your hands actually in the dirt. My goal is to have a sore back. A powerful antidote to uncertainty is immersing myself in something certain. Labor with plants is the perfect medicine.

Count your blessings. Catch a sunrise. Watch the rain. You get to grow plants! Life is good and that's for certain. **GT**

Art Parkerson works at Lancaster Farms, a wholesale nursery in Suffolk, Virginia. He's also the creative director of PLANTPOP, a horticultural cinema studio that makes documentary films about people and plants. To say hello, write to art@lancasterfarms.com.