



Ascension

Ascension WI EAP

Control and Stability in Uncertain Times

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Yesterday I raked the lawn between periods of mist and rain, and thought about what we really have around us that provides a sense of stability. There are so many non-stop sources of information – and misinformation. We have control over what sources of information we take in, as well as the frequency and duration of our exposure.

Though things are very different, the basics have not changed. I think we all remember to wash our hands, not touch things, and in particular not our faces. That last one is the hardest for me. I heard this morning from a doctor that wearing a mask, any type, can make it less likely that you will do so. I've tried it. It helps, but it seems to confuse my dog and make him anxious.

Decide what you will do, and then do it. Decisive action provides purpose, direction, and control. It allows you to be in control of your thinking rather than letting your feelings control your thinking. Decisive action allows us to accept the things we cannot change, but change the things we can. This is not a denial of our feelings, which are real and natural. It is just a way of focusing on what we can do, rather than attempting to think our way out of uncomfortable feelings (which is practically impossible).

As I raked on, I thought about many of the family camping trips I have taken when the weather was uncomfortable.....or miserable. Have you ever woken

up to four inches of snow? How many of us take a snow shovel camping? I thought about comfort – how to stay dry and warm, and the tasks associated with that. (At this point I went to the garage and got my raincoat on.) I remembered how we would cover the wood and hang up a series of interconnected tarps as windbreaks to keep the storm out. We played UNO, laughed, and told and retold funny stories about our family and my childhood while downing s'mores, hot chocolate and hobo pizzas made over the fire. And then, the comfort of a warm dry bed. That last part was also a learning experience. Where had the storm gone? It was still there, but our focus had changed, and so had our experience.

Focus on your problems only to the extent that you can have a positive impact on them. Think about a difficult time in the past and how you got through it, as well as what you learned and how you can apply that today. Pandemics don't conform to our lives, and neither does the rain.

Limit your screen time, and only trust credible, solution-focused sources. Actively involve yourself in problem solving, wash your hands, and don't touch your face. (Did I mention don't touch your face?) Get some exercise (rake the lawn?), keep your firewood dry, walk the dog, and play some UNO with your children....and don't cheat your daughter to get the game over sooner (like I did)!