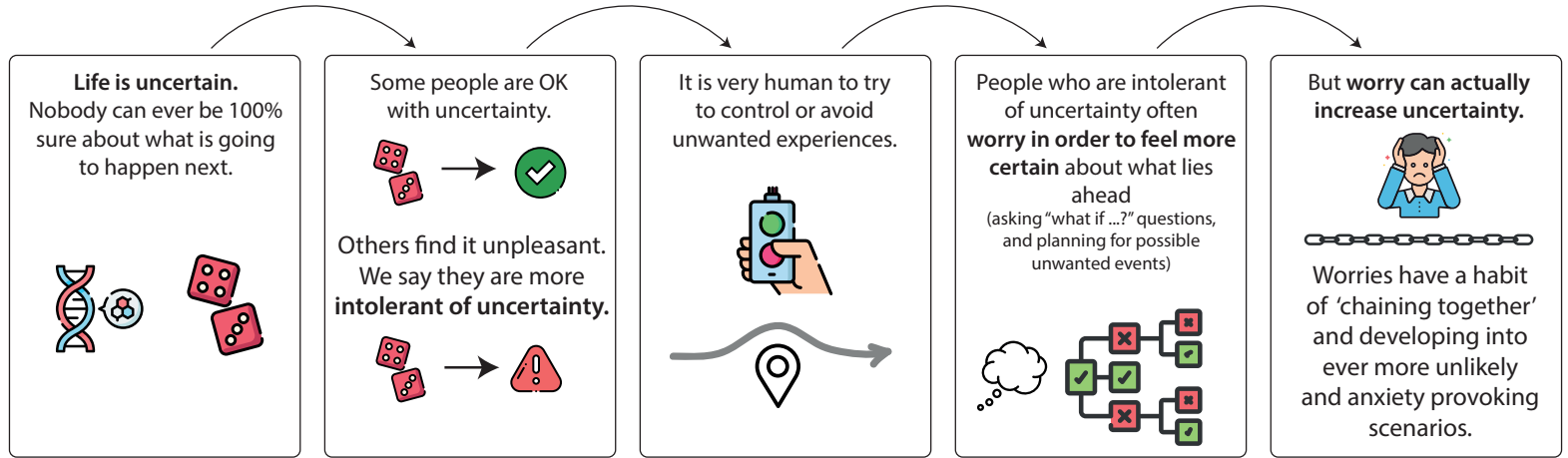


Intolerance of Uncertainty

One popular psychological theory about why people worry a lot concerns **uncertainty**. It goes like this:



Problematic strategies for managing uncertainty:

Avoiding new situations and sticking to your habits or routines

Intended consequences

- To feel comfortable and safe.

Unintended consequences

- You feel less confident (less able to do new things).
- Less 'practice' means more anxiety in new situations.
- You miss out on things that could have been fun.

so you avoid even more

Worrying and 'thinking ahead'

Intended consequences

- To be prepared for every possibility.
- To prevent bad outcomes.

Unintended consequences

- Worries can 'chain together' and branch off into unlikely possibilities about things that might never happen.
- Thinking about bad outcomes leads to more anxiety.

so you worry even more



More helpful strategies for managing uncertainty:

Accept that uncertainty is part of life. Once you have accepted that something is present you no longer need to fight it. You can even start to be curious about it.

Embrace uncertainty. Psychologists think that it can be helpful to face your fears and embrace uncertainty in order to learn that you can cope. You might even find that you enjoy it!

Rethink your attitude to uncertainty. What life would be like if there was no uncertainty? How would it feel if you knew *exactly* what was going to happen at every moment, if there were no surprises? How would it feel to watch a movie or read a book if you already knew the ending?