

THE VALUE OF UNCERTAINTY

"The future is uncertain... but this uncertainty is at the very heart of human creativity."

- Ilya Prigogine

It is once again the time of year when I am tasked with generating an article for the Hilltopper Highlights and, as has become tradition, I am uninterested in simply writing about back to school procedures and protocols. While there is value in this information, it can be presented in a less formal, more familiar way and so, I will take this opportunity to share some insights into what has become the defining term of 2020 – uncertainty. From mid-March until mid-July, I cannot find another word that more accurately defines the times in which we live; whether it is uncertainty related to a worldwide pandemic or it is the uncertainty that accompanies the social unrest in our country in light of racial inequalities, we are left to feel that there is little certainty surrounding us. This feeling of uncertainty, if left unchecked, can be dangerous and defeating as other emotions begin to present themselves – namely, fear and frustration. Most of us have grown accustomed to having answers at a moment's notice thanks to Siri and Alexa, and the phrase "Google it!" has become the response to doubters everywhere. The uncertainty that has accompanied the onset of COVID-19 has neutralized our ability to have "things" now, forcing us to relearn the concept of patience.

"Nothing in the world causes so much misery as uncertainty."

- Martin Luther

Personally, I despise uncertainty... not knowing when I will be able to go to Menards and not wear a face mask; not knowing when I will be able to take my boys to a minor league baseball game; not knowing when I can go out in public and not worry about getting sick. What I truly despise about uncertainty is not knowing what school will look like as we move forward. This past spring was an awful experience and one that provided me ample opportunities to stumble and wonder what the right next steps were – to be honest, this summer has not provided much relief. What makes Glenwood City great is our ability to generate a sense of community, which leads to a sense of belonging; the school closure order took that away in a blink of an eye. The proverbial rug was pulled out from underneath of us as we headed home for the last day of the 2019-2020 school year on March 13, with no direction other than schools were closed. An unimaginable and unanticipated response to COVID-19 that led to a chasm of uncertainty. I despise uncertainty...

Wait... this article is entitled, "The Value of Uncertainty" yet the focus has been on nothing but the frustration that accompanies uncertainty. How does uncertainty provide benefit to any of us when it feels as if the only thing that is constant is the frustration of not having answers? How can there be any value in a feeling that has generated such a great deal of tension and uneasiness? With all that we have experienced over the past four months, I have made it a point to find the silver lining that most assuredly accompanies our current situation. That silver lining is this – without uncertainty and the challenges, frustrations and fears that it brings, we could not learn about our own resilience and perseverance. Uncertainty helps create a stronger individual through finding a purpose and becoming true to it, regardless of the obstacles that are presented. While I despise uncertainty, I admire individuals who epitomize resiliency and perseverance; those individuals who are unwilling to get knocked down and stay down; those individuals who no one would blame if they threw in the towel; those individuals who deal with a constant barrage of uncertainty yet continue to move forward in an effort to better themselves. Maybe I don't despise uncertainty...

"Wherever there is change, and wherever there is uncertainty, there is opportunity."

- Mark Cuban

There is no doubt that I prefer the certainties of life that I had grown accustomed to versus the uncertainties that have been thrown my way this spring and summer, but I am coming to appreciate the value that uncertainty presents. Since early July, we have been providing students an opportunity to come to school in an effort to engage in our summer weightlifting/conditioning program and to participate in open gyms – these events have become more valuable than ever to our students as it has provided them a chance to reacquaint themselves with their peers and classmates in addition to working out. We are still at a point of not knowing whether we will be able to offer fall sports, yet we still have students who are coming in to improve their skills and be prepared for the potential of being able to represent Glenwood City on the gridiron or on the court. These students are not letting uncertainty hold them down, perhaps we can learn a lesson from the mindset of our teenagers by taking advantage of those things that we CAN DO, rather than lamenting about what we cannot. As the previous quote points out, opportunities abound at a time of so many unknowns. After all,

"There is nothing certain, but the uncertain."

- Proverbs