The dimension Uncertainty Avoidance has to do with the way a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known. This ambiguity brings with it anxiety and different cultures have learnt to deal with this anxiety in different ways.

In low uncertainty avoidance cultures, there is a fair degree of acceptance for new ideas, innovation and a willingness to try something new or different. Work-wise, this results in planning that is not detail oriented - the end goal will be clear but the detail of how to get there will be light and the actual process fluid and flexible to emerging and changing environment.

By contrast, people in cultures with high uncertainty avoidance are prone to maintain rigid codes of belief and behaviour and are often intolerant of unorthodox behaviour and ideas. In these cultures, there is an emotional need for rules (even if the rules do not seem to work), time equals money and people tend to be busy and work hard; precision and punctuality are the norm and innovation may be resisted.

**SHOULD WE TRY TO CONTROL THE FUTURE OR JUST LET IT HAPPEN?**

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**INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION WEEKLY**

**HOW CULTURES DEAL WITH UNCERTAINTY AND THE UNKNOWN**

**Low Uncertainty Avoidance**

People accept and feel comfortable in unstructured situations or changeable environments, try to have as few rules as possible, and are more tolerant of change.

**High Uncertainty Avoidance**

People try to minimize the occurrence of unknown and unusual circumstances and to proceed with careful changes by implementing laws and regulations.

**WORD OF THE WEEK**

Ayurnamat

‘That’s life’ can be a reconciling thought that follows a misfortune, with no guarantee of faring better in the future. ‘What’s done is done’ works well in signifying the end of a trivial event.

In Inuktitut, the language of the Inuit people, ayurnamat roughly translates as the philosophy that there is no point in worrying about events that cannot be changed.
The Indulgence dimension is defined as the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses, based on the way they were raised. Relatively weak control is called Indulgence and relatively strong control is called Restraint.

Indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun. By contrast, Restraint describes a society that suppresses gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms.

For example, indulgent cultures place more importance on freedom of speech and personal control while in restrained cultures there is a greater sense of helplessness about personal destiny.

In workplace, this is likely to have an impact on how willing employees are to voice opinions and give feedback. In cultures that are perceived as placing a greater importance on personal happiness and freedom, employees may be more likely to leave an organisation when they are not happy in their role.

In Georgia there is a word for this action - *shemomedjamo*. The phrase basically means: ‘I accidentally ate the whole thing!’

**Shemomedjamo**

You know how when you are eating something that is incredibly tasty you don’t even stop when you are full? The next thing you know, you’re utterly stuffed and bloated and even a little bit ill after such gluttony.

Word of the Week
This dimension describes how every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future, and societies prioritise these two existential goals differently.

Normative societies, which score low on this dimension, for example, prefer to maintain time-honoured traditions and norms while viewing societal change with suspicion. Those with a culture which scores high, on the other hand, take a more pragmatic approach: they encourage thrift and efforts in modern education as a way to prepare for the future.

In the US, for example, many people have very strong ideas about what is ‘good’ and ‘evil’. This may concern issues such as abortion, use of drugs, euthanasia, weapons or the size and rights of the government versus the States and versus citizens.

Meanwhile, American businesses measure their performance on a short-term basis, with profit and loss statements being issued on a quarterly basis. This also drives individuals to strive for quick results within the work place.

WORD OF THE WEEK

natsukashii
‘euphorically nostalgic’, this Japanese adjective refers to some small thing that brings you suddenly, joyously back to fond memories.

Not with a wistful longing for what’s past, but with an appreciation of the good times.