

General stress management and coping skills

basic relaxation techniques, concept of resilience

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Stress



Stress as a term

Definition: a state of worry or mental tension caused by a difficult situation (WHO, 2023)

- it is a non-specific response that varies in the degree of response
 - external** (related to the environment), but also **internal** (individual perceptions)
 - eustress* (perceived as positive) or *distress* (perceived as negative)
- stressors:
 - crises/catastrophes (e.g. natural disasters)
 - major life events (e.g. marriage, birth of a child, divorce, death of a loved one)
 - microstressors (e.g. making decisions, meeting deadlines)
 - ambient stressors (e.g. pollution, noise, crowding)
- there are variety of responses to stress that include adaptation, psychological coping, anxiety or depression

Stress models

„*Fight-or-flight*“ response (Cannon, 1915)

General Adaptation Syndrome (Selye, 1936)

Transactional Stress Model (Lazarus, 1974)

...

„*Fight-or-flight*“ response

- *fight-or-flight* (also called hyperarousal or the acute stress response) is a physiological reaction that occurs in response to a perceived harmful event, attack, or threat to survival
this theory states that animals react to threats with a general discharge of the sympathetic nervous system, preparing the animal for fighting or fleeing
- it was first described by **Walter Cannon**, who also developed the theory of *homeostasis* or *Cannon-Bard theory* (thalamic theory of emotion)

General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS)

- profile of how organisms respond to stress
- it was developed by **Hans Selye** (at the time called Selye's syndrome), who also coined the terms „*stressor*“ (causative event or stimulus, as opposed to the resulting state of stress) and „*eustress*“

Transactional stress model

- it was developed by **Richard Lazarus** (1922–2002)
- stress is not a direct response to a stressor, but cognitive processes of **appraisal** are central in determining whether a situation is potentially threatening, constitutes a harm/loss or a challenge, or is benign
- also, if the person possesses or can use adequate **coping** skills, then stress may not actually be a result → people can be taught to manage their stress and cope with their stressors

Coping

The background features a complex, abstract geometric pattern. It consists of numerous overlapping, semi-transparent polygons in various shades of purple and blue. The colors range from light lavender to deep, dark indigo. The shapes are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement, with some areas appearing more prominent than others due to the layering.

Coping as a term

Definition: conscious strategies used to reduce unpleasant emotions

- the term *coping* generally refers to adaptive (constructive) coping strategies, that is, strategies which reduce stress
 - coping strategies can be cognitions or behaviors and can be individual or social
- people use a mixture of several types of coping strategies, which may change over time

Coping strategies

1) Appraisal-focused (cognitive)

- when the person modifies the way they think

2) Adaptive behavioral (coping skills)

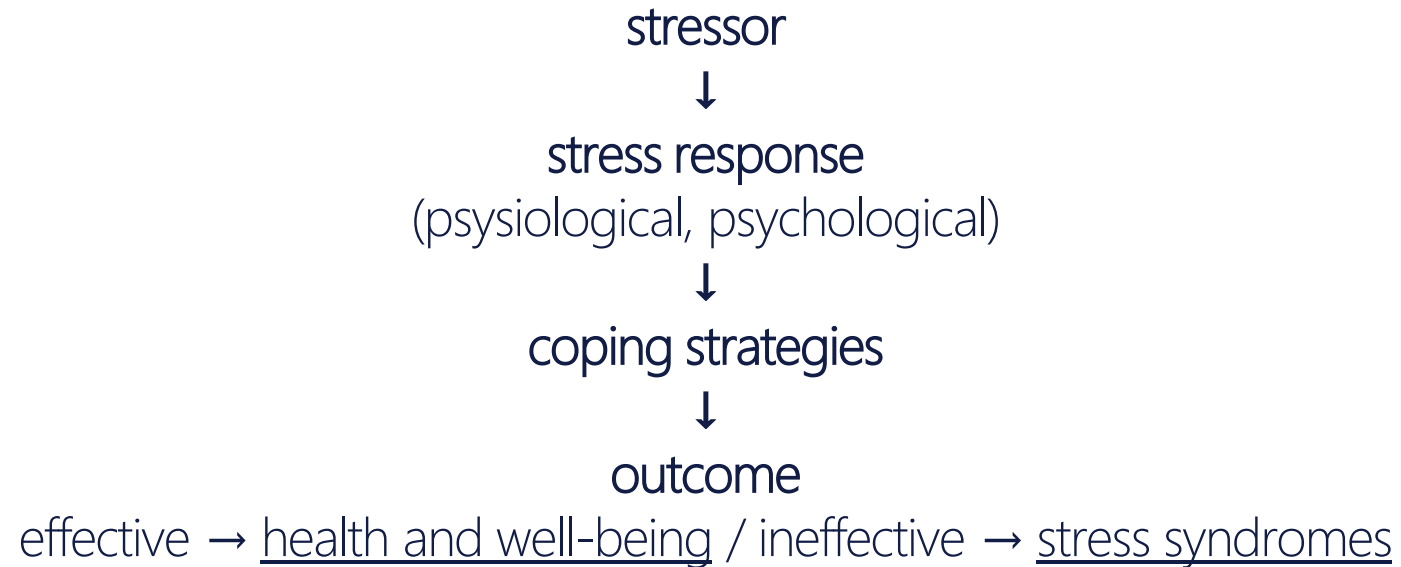
- strategies which reduce stress

3) Emotion-focused

- oriented toward managing the emotions that accompany the perception of stress (releasing pent-up emotions, distracting oneself, managing hostile feelings, meditating, mindfulness practices, using systematic relaxation procedures)



Coping strategies



Resilience

The background features a complex, abstract geometric pattern. It consists of numerous overlapping, semi-transparent polygons in various shades of purple, lavender, and blue. The shapes are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement, with some areas appearing darker due to the layering of colors. The overall effect is a modern, artistic, and textured backdrop.

Resilience as a term

Definition(s):

- ability to cope with a crisis
- adaptation in a person's psychological traits and experiences that allows them to regain or remain in a healthy mental state during crises without long-term negative consequences [1]
- integrated adaptation of physical, mental, and spiritual aspects to circumstances, and a coherent sense of self that is able to maintain normative developmental tasks that occur at various stages of life [2]

3 1. Herrman H, Stewart DE, Diaz-Granados N, Berger EL, Jackson B, Yuen T (May 2011). "What is Resilience?". *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*. 56 (5): 258-265.

2. Richardson, G.E. (2002), The metatheory of resilience and resiliency. *J. Clin. Psychol.*, 58: 307-321.



Resilience as a term

- the term was popularized by psychologist **Emmy Werner** ^[3], but it was also a major theoretical and research topic in the 1980s in studies of children with mothers diagnosed with schizophrenia
- resilience plays a crucial role in promoting mental health and well-being
- resilience, conceptualized as a positive **bio-psychological adaptation**, has proven to be a useful theoretical context for understanding variables for predicting long-term health and well-being
- resilience differs from **thriving** (thriving includes not only resilience, but an additional further improvement over the quality of life previous to the adverse event) ^[4]

Factors

- factors: internal (self-esteem, self-regulation, positive outlook on life), external (relationships, access to resources and opportunities)
- "protective factors" - good cognitive functioning (cognitive self-regulation, IQ), positive relationships (especially with competent adults, like parents)^[5]
- resilience traits are personal characteristics that express how people approach and react to events that they experience as negative (it negatively correlates with the personality traits of neuroticism and negative emotionality which represent tendencies to see and react to the world as threatening, problematic, and distressing, and to view oneself as vulnerable)

Measurement

- it is difficult to measure the resilience because it can be interpreted in a variety of ways (biomedical, cognitive-behavioral, sociocultural, etc.)
- measurement:
 - a) direct - Ego Resiliency Scale, Hardiness Scale, Psychological Resilience Scale, Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, Brief Resilience Scale,...
 - b) „proxy“ - personality, cognitive abilities and executive functions, affective systems (include emotional regulation systems), eudaimonic well-being, health systems

RESILIENCE

How to build resilience?

Prioritize relationships

Join a social group

Take care of your body

Practice mindfulness

Avoid negative coping outlets

Help others

Be proactive

Make progress toward your goals

Keep things in perspective

Accept change

Learn from your past

...





General stress management

Stress management techniques

Stress management techniques

- the ability to tolerate frustration and discomfort is central to stress management!
- social activity, cognitive therapy, getting a hobby, meditation, music, deep breathing, reading novels, prayer, relaxation techniques, artistic expression, humour, physical exercise, spending time in nature, time management, planning and decision making,...

Stress management techniques

#time management



Stress management techniques

#hobbies, #lifestyle



Stress management techniques

#social activity, #prayer



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Stress management techniques

#physical exercise



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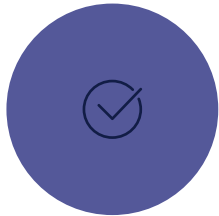
Stress management techniques

#art, #music

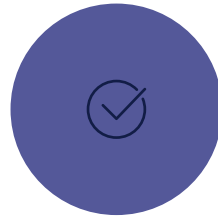


Stress management techniques

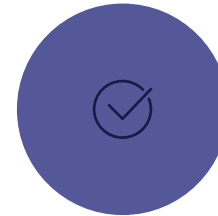
#relaxation



Quick relaxation



Autogenic training



Jacobson's progressive relaxation

Stress management techniques

#relaxation

Quick relaxation

1. Take one to three deep breaths and exhale slowly each time
2. Before each exhalation, mentally say "relax"
3. Realize where the tension is felt and relax as many muscles as possible

Thank you for
your attention