

## Chapter 6: Stress Management Strategies

Introductory  
Information



### 6.1 Introductory Information

- 1- **Treatment or therapy** is the preferred word by those who work one on one with individual client, families or small groups, but stress management refers to programs for people in general, less often for special groups characterized by some shared problem (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, p.334).
- 2- **Coping is the process of managing demands** (external or internal) that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person.
- 3- **Coping consists of efforts, both action-oriented and intrapsychic** to manage (master, tolerate, reduce, minimize) environmental and internal demands and conflicts among them.
- 4- **Coping is a series of transactions between a person who has a set of resources, values, and commitments** as well as a particular environment with its own resources, demands and constraints. Thus, coping is not a one time action that someone takes, rather, it is a set of responses, occurring over time, by which the environment and the person influence each other (Through: Taylor, 1999, p.204-205). Figure 6.1 illustrates the coping process.
- 5- **Effective stress management** has clear health benefits in controlling stress-related disorders.
- 6- **Stress management programs** have been used successfully to treat muscle contraction headaches, to manage migraine headaches, to control high blood pressure, to treat alcohol abuse and obesity, to train individuals with symptom of cardiovascular disease or myocardial infraction (Ibid., 230-231).
- 7- **Individual coping strategies** are ways of coping with stress that has already occurred. (Luthans, 1992, p.413).
- 8- **Group programs** may be useful when coping failure is due to an uncomplicated lack of knowledge, skill or experience (Lazarus & Falkman, 1984, p.363).
- 9- **More commonly, stress management** is taught through workshops (Taylor, 1999, p.230).

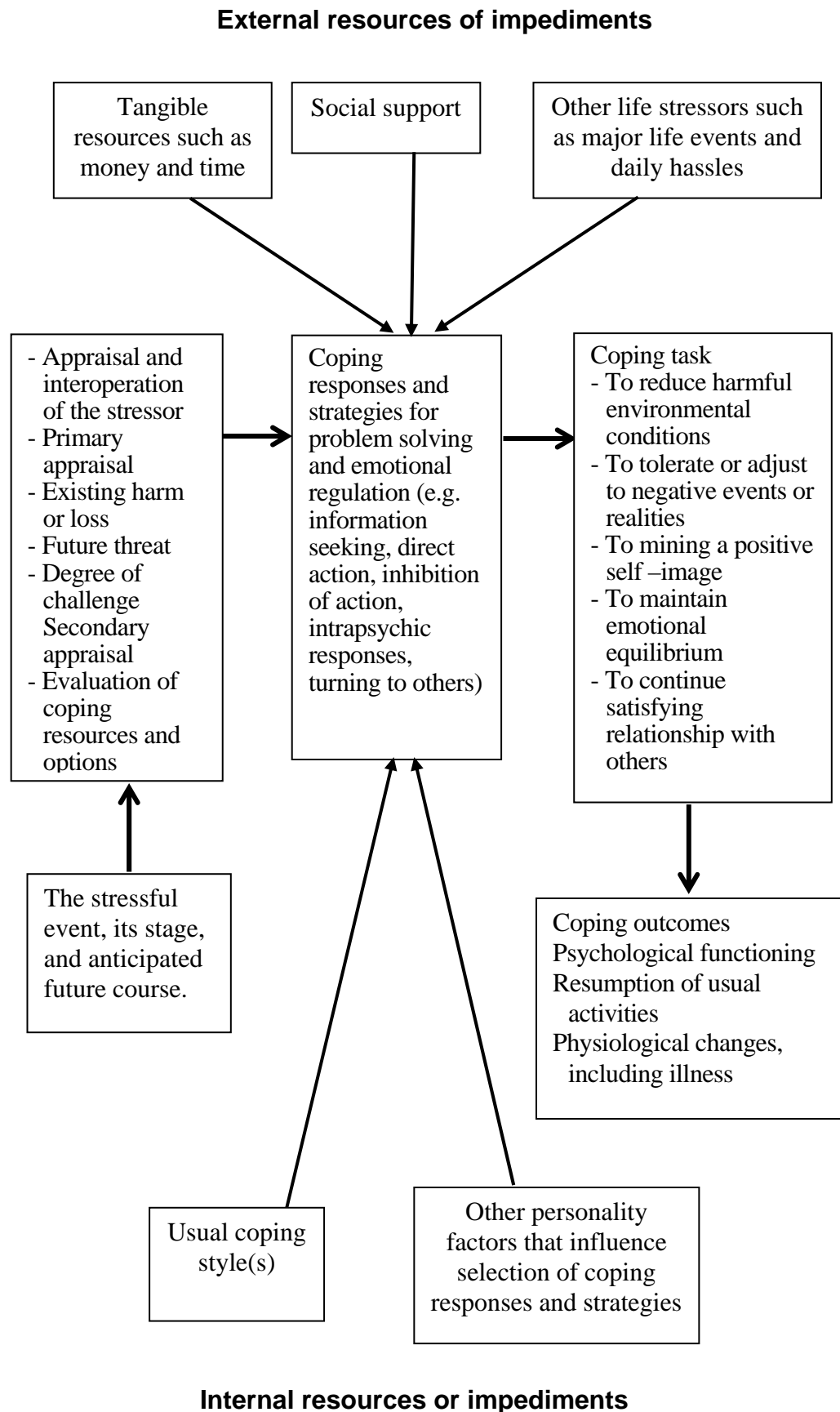
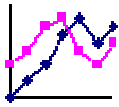


Figure 6.1: Coping process. (Through: Lazarus & Folkman, 1984)

Determinants  
of Effective  
Coping



## 6.2 Determinants of Effective Coping

There are nine major kinds of variables that determine effective coping to stress:

- a) **Personality traits** such as, positive affectivity, hardiness, optimism, psychological control, self-esteem, conscientiousness, ego strength and self confidence.
- b) **Internal resources** such as, coherence about one's life, sense of meaning in one's life, sense of humor and religion (Ibid, pp. 208-211).
- c) **External resources** which include, time, money, education, a decent job, children, friends, family, standard of living and the presence of other life stressors (Moss, 1995).
- d) **Coping with strategies themselves**, as Lazarus & Folkman (1984) are indicating, problem focused coping is more effective than emotion focused coping.
- e) **Heredity**. Affects the ability to cope with stress because, to some extent, the family genes play a role in the overall wellness of a particular organ or muscle group. Some families have a predisposition to heart disease, others to stomach problems, and so on.
- f) **Overall Level of Health**. The healthier you are to begin with, the longer it will take the stress to have an impact strong enough to exhaust the particular organ or muscle group.
- g) **Environment**. Environment can contribute significantly to how well you are able to stand up to stress. It can either add to the damage going on or increase your overall level of wellness. For example, consider the following situation: A manager's family has been having problems with heartburn and upset stomach. This morning she had to attend a staff meeting that took longer than she had anticipated. It is 2 p.m. and she is late for a meeting with a major customer. She must grab a quick lunch on the run, and the closest spot for that is a taco stand. She chooses a couple of spicy burritos and washes them down with strong coffee. She gets stuck in traffic on her way to the customer's office. When she does get there, she learns that the customer is dissatisfied with the quality of the product he is purchasing from the manager's company and has begun to look for other suppliers. Once, back at her office, the manager notices that she has a terrible stomach ache and starts looking around for her antacid tablets. Chances are so good that the manager's stomach isn't going to last long at this rate!
- h) **The Severity of Stressful Situations**. The more severe the stressful situation, the higher your hormone output will be. With lower levels of stress, your steroid secretion is lower, which gives your body a chance to metabolize the steroids, effectively removing them from your bloodstream.
- i) **Energy Level**. You, like everyone, have an optimal amount of physical and mental energy you can command at any one time. This optimal level of energy is determined by your overall level of health, daily nutrition, upbringing, and personality. When more than

one worry or crisis is occurring at the same time, your mental and physical energy has to be diverted to handle all of the crisis situations. This means that you have less energy available to handle each individual crisis. The less energy you can supply to an organ or muscle group, the faster it will fatigue, and the less able it is to respond to stress.

Eventually, your body's "first-choice" organ group will become exhausted and ultimately damaged. If the stressful situation is still present, your body will switch the coping responsibility to another organ or muscle group. That's why some people get a skin rash after they get asthma or develop low back pain after they get an ulcer. If the stressful situation is still not resolved, eventually the second organ or muscle group will become exhausted and your body will shift the coping responsibility to a third organ group and on and on.

General  
Guidelines  
for Stress  
Management



### 6.3 General Guidelines for Stress Management

- 1) You must get rid of less effective strategies such as :
  - a) Escaping from the stressful situation (withdrawal)
  - b) Denying that stress exists (denial)
  - c) Seeing one's problems as other people's problems (Projection)
  - d) Becoming obsessed about achieving routine work
  - e) Working harder
  - f) Changing to a different work task (Cranwell-Ward, 1987, pp.116-118).
- 2) Develop your self management skills.
- 3) Improve your emotional management.
- 4) Manage relationships more effectively.
- 5) Improve your problem-solving approach.
- 6) Assess your outlook on life and develop a more positive distance if necessary.
- 7) Develop an effective approach to managing change.
- 8) Seek outside help if necessary.
- 9) Develop ways to reduce negative effects of stress such as:
  - a) Learn to appreciate the potential value of stress in creating incentive and sense of purpose, which we all need in our lives
  - b) Get to know yourself and become fully aware of your personality type
  - c) Remember that stress is caused from within and can be best dealt with from within
  - d) Be aware of your own stress levels
  - e) Learn to identify the various sources of stress inherent in your own particular life style
  - f) Be aware of your reactions to different sources of stress, so that do not take you by surprise
  - g) Avoid perfectionism, when this means expecting too much of both yourself and others

- h) Avoid unnecessarily provoking situations where possible
  - i) Avoid over committing yourself “learn when to say “no” without feeling guilty
  - j) Avoid fragmentation which is often caused by trying to do several things at one time
  - k) Know how to avoid causing stress to others
  - l) Be aware of unnecessary worrying
  - m) Anticipate stress and plan your response to it.
- 10) Learn the value of positive thinking.
  - 11) Discover how effective a cheerful outlook can be.
  - 12) Be, as sure as you can be, of what your motives really are and make sure that you are really happy with them.
  - 13) Acquire the habit of sorting your priorities.
  - 14) Learn the art of effective delegation.
  - 15) Get into the habit of talking problems through rather than bottling them up.
  - 16) Don't forget that listening is as important as talking in effective communication.
  - 17) Learn to value physical fitness as a means to realization and antidote to stress, and do all you can to acquire it (Cranwell –Ward, 1987, pp.121-122; Dore 1990, pp. 13-14).
  - 18) Develop a sense of quiet and engineer your environment.
  - 19) Keep your work and private life separate.
  - 20) Build a satisfying family life.
  - 21) Do what you enjoy and enjoy what you do.
  - 22) Manage your time.
  - 23) Take time away from work. (GUPCO, 1999).

Specific  
Techniques  
for Stress  
Management

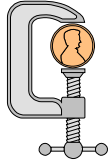


## 6.4 Specific Techniques for Stress Management

There are many techniques for stress management that we can put under the title of a cognitive behavior therapy. They include:

- 1) Relaxation training.
  - 2) Social skills training.
  - 3) Assertiveness training.
  - 4) Good health habits education.
  - 5) Social support providing.
  - 6) Self monitoring.
  - 7) The modification of internal dialogues.
  - 8) Goal setting.
  - 9) Homework assignments.
  - 10) Positive self-talk.
  - 11) Self-instruction.
  - 12) Contingency contracting.
  - 13) Stress inoculation training.
  - 14) Behavioral self control.
  - 15) Training in supplementary skills (Time management).
- (See : Ibraheem, 1994; El-Mohareb, 1420, Leahy, 1997).

## 6.5 Job Stress Management



Although all **previous guidelines and techniques are helpful in managing job stress**, *there are other methods that may be more related with work, they include:*

- 1) Job design and job description.
- 2) Group dynamics in work place.
- 3) Management of conflict and clarifying of organizational roles.
- 4) Good communication skills.
- 5) Good leadership styles.
- 6) Effective political strategies.
- 7) Organization processes.
- 8) Decision making skills.
- 9) Organization development techniques.
- 10) Supportive organizational climate.
- 11) Planning and developing careers.
- 12) Receiving feedback.
- 13) Resilience.
- 14) Good physical environment at work.

(See : Dore, 1990; Luthans, 1992)