**Stress & Coping Models**

**General model:**

- Stressor
  - Different stress level
    - Coping Strategy
      - Outcome

- There can be various stressors that can cause different levels of stress.
- Relevant coping strategies (affordable/ doable) will be performed; sometimes may increase the stress level.
- Eventually, the outcome of the coping process is determined.
Whenever stressor exists, individual will do the subjective-cognitive evaluation onto it (normally on the degree of one’s control over the stressor & its impact)

• 3 possible responses may occur: emotional / physiological / behavioural

• Eg: ???
Subjective-cognitive evaluation is done onto the meaning of the stressor & the intensity of the responses

Adaptation is also mapped in the model

All these processes can be highly influenced by the types and availability of coping resources (eg social support, self characteristics etc)

Matheny’s Model of Stress & Coping (1986)

Matheny’s Model describes factors that can influence coping strategies

Stressor and individual definition of stressor may influence the stress level

This is also highly related with the availability & quality of coping resources; thus impacting the coping strategy
ABC-X Model (Reuben Hill, 1949; 1958)

A  B  C  X

- Family Crisis Model ABC-X (focusing on family functioning following a stressful situation)
- Foundation theories = Social System & Ecological
- A = Stressor (potential event that can change family system)
- B = Existing resources (that can be used as coping resources)
- C = Family's perceptions/definitions regarding the seriousness of A and amount of B that are available
- X = Crisis or stress

A-Stressor (and demands)

4 categories depending upon the impact on the family (McCubbin & Patterson, 1982)
1. Additional family member (changes in family structure due to new comers)
2. Loss of family member changes in structure due to death
3. Loss of moral / family cohesiveness (ie due to drug addictions, jail term etc)
4. Loss of structure & moral (ie due to divorce, incest etc)

Lipman & Blumen (1975) introduced a comprehensive scheme to evaluate family crisis:
1. The origin of stressor (external vs internal)
2. Direct or indirect impact of stress on all family members or some of them
3. Gradual vs Sudden occurrence
4. Expected vs unexpected occurrence
5. Severity of the impact
6. Short term vs long term adaptation towards stressor
7. Natural causes vs man made
8. Belief towards ability to manage the stress (capable vs beyond control)
B=Coping Resources (availability of existing resources)

Ability of family to overcome the stressor and manage the stress effectively

- Family integration = family strength (love & care within the family system; economic dependency)
- Family adaptation ability = family’s ability to identify hurdles & take action; i.e. family agreement towards role and structure, family goals, putting family as first priority rather than being individualistic and upholding family emotional well-being

C= Focusing on stress (perceptions/definitions)

Values & earlier experiences of the family members will influence C

Family stress is an outcome of stressor, transition or demands that cannot be met easily by the family (imbalance between demands & supply)

Hyperstress occurs when demand exceeds supply & hypostress when resources exceed demand

X= Family Crisis – demands for change to occur

Crisis = a continuous variable that depicts disturbance, chaotic or inability of the family system
Crisis is a bit different from stress; it means the inability of family to maintain stability & suffer from continuous stress in family structure & interaction pattern
Stress will not lead to crisis if the family is able to use existing resources & define the situation effectively to manage the changes in the family system
• Although ABC-X model is one of the most popular & useful models in the field, it has a few weaknesses:
  • It seems to be deterministic and linear in nature
  • Not comprehensive enough
  • Does not cover stress management
  • Therefore, a new model was developed to improve this model.

The Double ABC-X model (McCubbin, 1983)

• The Double ABC-X model (McCubbin, 1983; 1989)
• Added: post crisis factor, to explain how families achieve satisfactory stress adaptation
• It is focusing on the family adaptation process towards X

The Double aA factor refers to the accumulated stress within the family system, inclusive of:
– Factors that are not settled regarding earlier stressors
– Changes & events that happen without considering earlier stressors
– The consequence of family efforts in coping with the difficulties
The Double bB factor refers to 2 types of family resources
– Existing resources that can minimize the impact of stressor
– Coping resources (personal, family and social) that are strengthened in responding to the stress or crisis

The Double cC refers to:
– Perceptions towards earlier stressor
– Perceptions towards stress & crisis; which include family’s perceptions towards stressor and the associated difficulties and accumulated events’ and meanings that are given by families on the situations as a whole (Perception towards post stress includes faiths, restating/redefine the situation and assign new meaning to it)

The Double xX factor refers earlier responses or family stress and adaptations that follows
– Based on the time continuum, family stress or crises is on one end while adaptation is on the other

The Roller Coaster Model (Koos, 1946; Burr & Klein; 1994)
• Depicts family perceptions towards the impact of stressor onto selected family functioning such as quality of family communications, quality of marital relationship, stability of daily routines and family cohesiveness
• Families are asked on their functions before (pra-crisis), during stress and after stress (post krisis)
Everly & Lating (2002) identified 3 key elements of arousal that characterized stress response & precursors to development of stress related disease. The 3 elements are:

1. Increased neurotransmitter arousal & activity
2. Increased neuromuscular arousal
3. Increased negative cognitive arousal

A comprehensive coping model should incorporate strategies to break the chain, stop the stress response and initiate relaxation response.
The stress zone (Williams, S. 1994)

- Stress is experienced through 5 different pressure/performance zones
- Each zone can be difficult to manage or maybe an opportunity for positive change, depending upon personal resources & expectations
- Human’s performance level is highest when he/she is “stretched” to the maximum;
- but it dips as soon as he/she is overstretched where he/she is straining to keep up with the pressures put upon him/her

The 5 zones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Name of zone</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Boredom</td>
<td>Skills under-utilized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td>Stuck in a “comfort” zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Stretch</td>
<td>Challenged to a degree that you can manage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Strain</td>
<td>Challenged beyond the ability to cope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Panic</td>
<td>At breaking point</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Levels 1 & 2 have their challenges, but the stress levels are manageable
- Level 3 is the one to aim for
- Levels 4 & 5 are serious conditions & can lead to mental burnout & physical breakdown
The pressure/performance stages

1. The boredom zone:
   – Being bored & under-stimulated may make people be less motivated to grow & develop
   – Although, with a little external pressure, the symptoms of negative stress may develop as the result of disappointment or frustration
   
   To move out of the boredom zone:
   
   Identify ways to stretch the self mentally & physically; setting personal goals & take practical steps to achieve them

2. The comfort zone
   – a stage in a learning process where things are familiar
   – i.e. being satisfied with a level of competence at work; with a social situation; or being comfortable in a routine or with life in general
   – People are content & can manage whatever comes their way;
   – Maybe some feelings of dissatisfaction relating to lack of growth, stimulation, or overall achievement

To move out of the comfort zone:

   – Be CONSCIOUSLY comfortable in order to avoid the tendency to drift into boredom
   – Do not resist change & challenge
   – Be aware with short & long term goals
The stretch zone
• Represents a healthy level of stress
• External stimulus encourage personal growth, learning & development
• However, there is a balance that needs to be maintained
• People continue to learn & grow as long as external pressures are handled effectively; but
• If get to be over stretched, if the learning continues unabated at too great a pace, or if people are subjected to other people’s stress,
• The negative effects of stress will develop & chronic stretch will become strain

To stay in balance in the stretch zone
– Planning & review are the keys to managing the stretch zone (ie at home? At work?)
– Understudy the previous experiences to understand the current situation

The strain zone
• Strain on the body is the result of experiencing the chronic effects of being overstretched for a long period of time
• Symptoms begin to appear
• Diminished productivity; reduced (or lost) personal motivation & interest in things going around
• > fatigue; > desire to retreat from the world
• To move out of the strain zone
  – Take time to take a stock
  – In need of some objective help to get constructive result

The panic zone
• Being aware of “not coping”
• But not aware of so many other things
• Potential to harm self or others physically & psychologically
• Can easily be emotionally out of control
• Panic can lead to impulsive or extreme behaviour
• High risk for breakdown & illness

• To avoid or move out of the panic zone
  – Take a stop to change the current “frame of mind”
  – Relaxation technique may help in acute situations
  – Must learn to be in control
## Effects of the 5 performance zones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Short-term effect</th>
<th>Long-term effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boredom</td>
<td>Stagnation &amp; lethargy</td>
<td>Negative stress symptoms caused by discontent or lack of stimulus result in strain &amp; panic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td>Balance &amp; contentment</td>
<td>Lack of growth leads to boredom or motivation to stretch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stretch</td>
<td>Anxiety &amp; positive stress. Growth &amp; learning, leading to either comfort or strain</td>
<td>Negative stress symptoms caused by exhaustion &amp; lack of balance may lead to strain &amp; panic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strain</td>
<td>Stress symptoms</td>
<td>Illness, depression, leading to burnout &amp; panic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panic</td>
<td>Fear. Loss of control. “Fight or Flight”. Extreme emotions</td>
<td>Breakdown, a catalyst for dramatic change.</td>
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