COPING

Does a person really COPE with stress?

- What is coping
- When?
- How?
- What?
- Why?

What does it mean?

- Latin word “colpus” means to alter
- Webster’s dictionary “dealing with & attempting to overcome problems & difficulties
- Oxford American Dictionary: “to manage successfully”

What does it mean?

- Widely used term along with stress (normal “people” face stress; media made it popular)
- One needs “to cope with life”
- Aldwin (2007) reinstates that coping is fundamentally important, relevance for psychological & bio-medical models of adaptations

Intrinsic interest

- Along with stress as a of everyday life, managing stress has immediate personal relevance
- The search for mastery and control over one’s own life
- Life is ever changing – changes in social roles; shifted paradigm? Values?
- Coping is important to “move on with life”

Relevance of coping to psychosocial models of adaptations

- For stress, its relevance is in 2 contributions:
  - Its ability to combine environmental & personal factors with the development of mental illness through the construct of vulnerability to stress
  - The notion of goodness of fit – psychological adaptation is a match between the demands of a situation & capacities of a person
- In coping, multiple environmental & personal factors are combined in order to provide flexibility in adaptation – goodness of fit OK, coping OK
Relevance to biomedical models of adaptation

- With coping, people don’t get sick every time they are under stress
- Sometimes stress results in ill health; so what makes the different? COPING
- People may be able to protect their health if they know how to manage stress
- Coping with illness? Very important to ensure survival time/recovery

COPING definitions

- Use of strategies for dealing with actual or anticipatory problems & their accompanied negative emotions (Aldwin, 2007).
- Can be done both conscious & unconsciously
- Personal, interactional & transactional; social & cultural environments may influence both stress & coping (micro ➔ macro); coping does not occur in vacuum!
- The meaning of coping (to the person & all involved) is important for people involved in the process, coping can have both positive or negative effects on self & others

(Lazarus and Folkman, 1984)

- "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (process oriented)
- Coping allows people to use various skills to manage the difficulties they face in life.

WHAT IS COPING?

- The process of managing taxing circumstances, using effort to solve problems (personal & interpersonal); and seeking to master, minimize, reduce or tolerate stress or conflict.
- People either approach or avoid the problem
Adaptation, Coping & Emotional Responses

• Adaptation includes defenses, mastery, & coping strategies (White, 1961).
• Management skills – certain skills developed by people to deal with life (routines – are not coping strategies per se); but can become coping resources
• Coping style – characteristics ways of handling problems; while management skills refer to situation specific skills used to avoid problems

Anticipatory coping – “something in between management skills & coping styles: - to prevent or minimize problems that are likely to occur (i.e getting the car serviced b4 a long journey)
• Involuntary emotional reactions are not coping strategies (i.e crying out of pain when one has a cut on her/his finger)
• Coping strategies consist of both cognitions & behavioral components, directed to manage problems & negative emotions (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980)
• CS requires EFFORT

Coping resources

• Coping resources are the characteristics or strengths a family/an individual has at its disposal (Burr & Klein, 1994)
• Coping resources are the material and/or psychological strength possessed by persons or families. Coping resources can be used to manage, reduce or eliminate stress.

Coping resources

• function as internal and/or external mechanisms, primarily psychosocial factors that influence resilience (Kurtz, 1994)

Matheny Et Al (1986) - Coping Resources Are...

• “... conditions or attributes that (1) decrease the likelihood that demands will be perceived as stressors, or (2) increase the effectiveness of coping behaviors (such as social support and confidence)

Types of coping resources

• Personal
• Social
Personal coping resources

- Individuals who are affluent, healthy, capable, and optimistic are seen as resourceful and, thus, are less vulnerable toward the stress of life.
- It is of most importance to be competent to handle a stressful situation.

Social Coping Resources

- Social support can assist coping & exert beneficial effects on various health outcomes (Rodin & Salovey, 1989; Sarason, Sarason, & Pierce, 1990).
- Social support has been defined in various ways, for example as:
  > "resources provided by others" (Cohen & Syme, 1985),
  > "coping assistance" (Thoits, 1986), or
  > an exchange of resources "perceived by the provider or the recipient to be intended to enhance the well-being of the recipient" (Shumaker & Brownell, 1984, p. 13).

- Social support has been found advantageous in the recovery from surgery in heart patients.
- Kulik and Mahler (1989) studied men who had undergone coronary artery bypass surgery. Those who received many visits by their spouses were, on average, released somewhat earlier from hospital than those who received only few visits.
- In a longitudinal study, the same authors also found positive effects of emotional support after surgery (Kulik & Mahler, 1993).

Types of social support:
- instrumental support (e.g., assist with a problem),
- tangible support (e.g., donate goods),
- informational support (e.g., give advice),
- emotional support (e.g., give reassurance), among others.
- The definition & measurement problems involved in studying the social support construct, however, have remained an issue for debate.

OTHER COPING RESOURCES

- Cognitive – belief system
- Values – positive attitudes
- Personal construct – self confidence
- Physical and mental health
- Religion
- Monetary?
- In family?
Coping resources

- Coping resources are the material (physical or social) and/or psychological possessed by persons or families.
- Coping resources can be used to manage, reduce or eliminate stress.
- Coping resources play an important role in understanding the ways in which an individual might approach or perceive stressful events.

Identifying coping resources

- The Coping Resources Inventory (Hammer, 1988) is a 60 item self-report instrument designed for use with adults & older adolescents.
  - The CRI uses a 4-point Likert scale format (never or rarely, sometimes, often, and always or almost always) to describe behavior the participant has engaged in within the last 6 months.
  - The CRI is designed to measure an individual's current coping resources used to manage stress.

Five coping resources measured by CRI are:

- Cognitive
- Social
- Emotional
- Spiritual/philosophical
- Physical.