



UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

Stress & Coping

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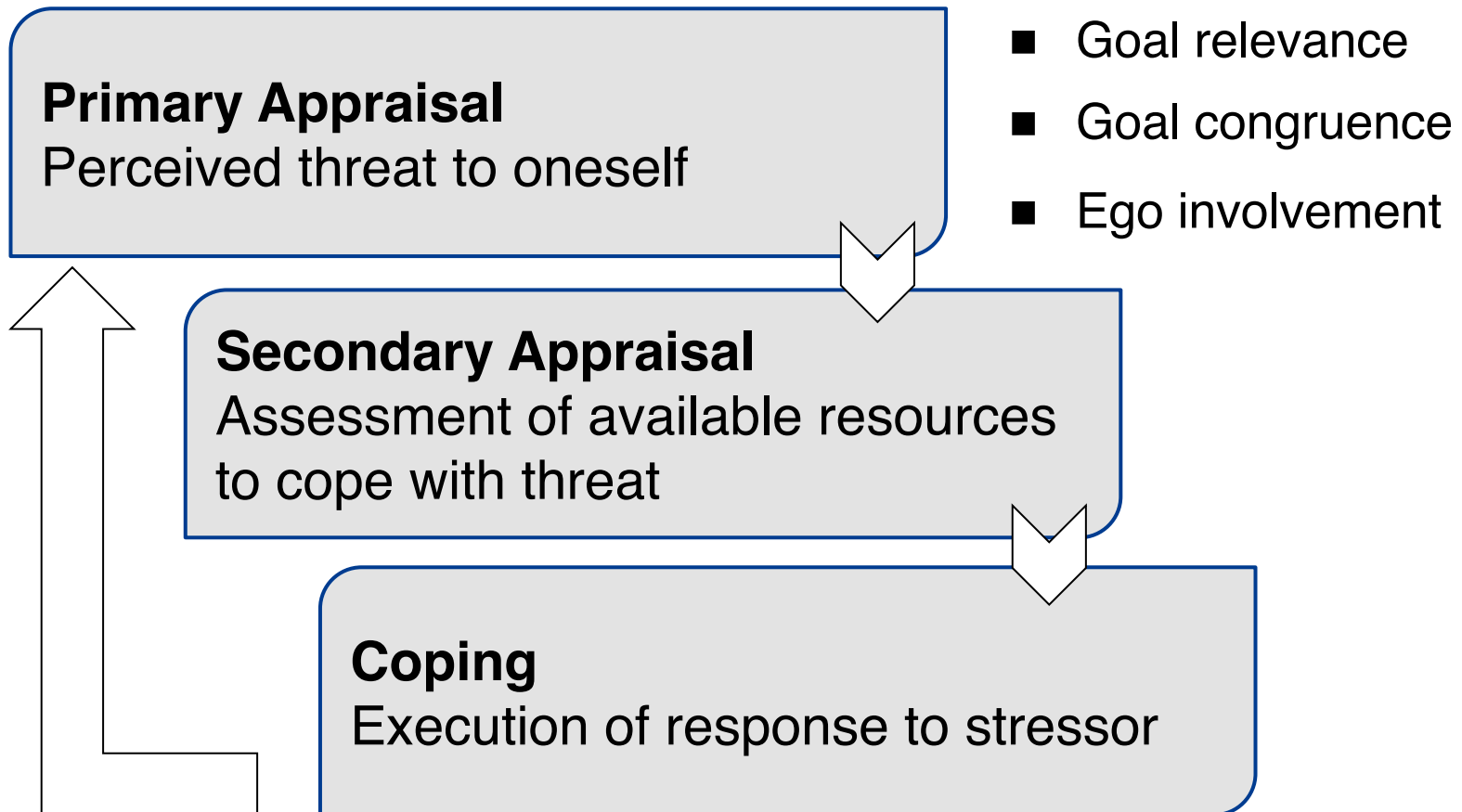
Today's talk

- Conceptualization of stress
- Stress response
- Evaluation / monitoring
- Stress management, coping strategies

Overview of the Concept of Stress

- Perceptual phenomenon
- Stress arises when individuals perceive they cannot cope with the demands placed on them or threats to their well-being
- A sustained perceived lack of equilibrium over a period of time leads to ill-health

Stressful Situations



based on Lazarus (2000)

PAST

PRESENT

FUTURE

Benefit / Gain
Harm/ Loss

Task-oriented

Challenge
Threat

Types of Stress

Acute Stress

- From specific events or situations involving:
 - **Novelty**
 - **Unpredictability**
 - **Threat to the ego**
 - **Sense of control**

Types of Stress

Chronic Stress

- Repeated exposure to situations.
- Linked to:
 - Heart disease
 - High blood pressure
 - Type II diabetes
 - Depression
 - Memory disorders
 - Gastrointestinal disorders
 - Infectious disease
 - Anxiety disorders
 - etc ...

Challenge Appraisal

- Activation of the sympathetic–adrenal–medullary (SAM) axis, increased cardiac efficiency, and vasodilation— changes that signal an approach orientation and increase peripheral blood flow

Threat Appraisal

- Activation of (SAM) axis, with reduced cardiac efficiency and vasoconstriction— changes that signal an avoidance orientation and prepare the body for damage/defeat

based on Blascovich & Mendes (2010)

Psychological Symptoms

- Racing mind, lack of focus
- Anxiety, worry
- Depression
- Emotional instability
- Feeling unable to cope
- Lack of sense of humour
- Frustration, anger
- Poor memory

Behavioural Symptoms

- Increased arguments / outbursts of anger
- Withdrawing from social activities
- Sleep problems
- Less productivity
- Reduced job satisfaction / increased probability of burnout
- Increased coffee consumption / drinking / smoking

Measures

- Objective measures of hormone levels
- Self-report questionnaires
- State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger et al. 1970)
- Positive & Negative Affect Schedule (Watson et al, 1988)
- Global Perceived Stress (Kelly, 1992)
- Burnout Survey (Kelly, 1992)



Coping with Stress

Constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific internal and/or external demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person

—Lazarus & Folkman



Sometimes we fail to evaluate the situation by

- overestimating:
 - the likelihood that the stressor will occur
 - the negative consequences
 - the duration or permanence
- considering worst-case scenarios with multiple bad outcomes
- underestimating:
 - personal ability to cope
 - important coping resources
 - or underutilizing friends, family, or others willing and able to help

Problem focused coping targets the causes of stress in practical ways directly reducing the stress

- changing the situation
- redefining the problem
- looking at alternative solutions
- evaluating the implications of the alternatives
- choosing the best one to act on

Emotion focused coping involves trying to reduce the negative emotional responses associated with stress

- controlling and possibly changing the emotional response to an event
- cognitive responses such as avoidance or minimization
- the goal is to decrease emotional distress

DECIDE

Schedule a time

DO

Do right away

IMPORTANT

NOT URGENT

URGENT

DELETE

Or eliminate

DELEGATE

Who can do it ?

NOT IMPORTANT



Time Management

- Clarify your values, priorities
- Be proactive vs. reactive, set goals
- Develop an action plan
- Combat procrastination, perfectionistic worries
- Manage interruptions
- Evaluate progress & how you spend your time

The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another

—William James

Participants

28 753 from 1998 National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), (of whom 2 960 had died)

Measures

- Amount, perceived health impact of stress, stress reduction
- Health status
- Psychological distress
- Mortality

Results

Those who reported high stress and high impact on health had a 43% increased risk of premature death

Emotional experience
State-like
(i.e., I am anxious)

Emotional pattern
Trait-like
(i.e., I am usually anxious)

Meta-experience
(i.e., being anxious is good for
me, it helps me)



Emotion Regulation

To be able to regulate one's own emotional experiences it is important to recognize

- Potential stressors
- Psychological, physiological, behavioural responses
- Personal meaning or the situation & the experience
- Impact or consequences

Sometimes stress or unpleasant emotions may be helpful

- Emotions are signals that there is a need to do something. They may lead to increased effort, motivation or focus

Inner dialogue

Identify what you say to yourself

- Negative statements:
 - Trigger stress
 - Decrease enjoyment
- Positive statements (realistic & constructive)
 - Help reach goals
 - Do not guaranty success !
- Negative thoughts:
 - are learned
 - often unnoticed/automatic
 - can be detected, backtracked when stressed

Irrational beliefs

- Demandingness
- Awfulizing
- Low frustration tolerance
- Self/Other/World depreciating
- Overgeneralizations
- Distortions of reality

A B C ... model

Stressful
“**A**ctivating event”



Automatic Thoughts
“**B**eliefs”



Reactions
“**C**onsequences”

- Emotional
- Behavioral
- Physiological



*D*isputing Irrational
Beliefs



*E*xpected New
Behaviors

Take Home Messages

- Know yourself, what situations make you feel threatened, how do we react
- Remember that emotions are just signals / warnings of how we perceive a situation
- Be aware, do not deny stress
- Positive coping / management, look for solutions
- Planning tasks, distractions, breaks
- Revise own beliefs
- Develop healthy habits, resources



Thanks for your attention

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