

# 15.3 Coping With Stress

## Objectives:

- Explain defensive strategies of coping with stress.
- Describe active strategies of coping with groups.

# I. Psychological Coping Strategies

- A. A cognitive appraisal (or evaluation) is an interpretation of an event that helps determine its stress impact.

Asks: “How stressful will this event be to me.”

- B. Two defensive coping strategies are denial and intellectualization.

# I. Psychological Coping Strategies (con't)

Denial is when you decide that an event you experience is not really stressful.

Intellectualization is a way of coping in which you size up a situation without getting emotionally involved.

Problem: Both strategies may help can help prevent physical stress reactions to stress, but you are not really dealing with the problem.

# I. Psychological Coping Strategies (con't)

- C. By viewing situations as a challenge rather than a threat you can deal with stress actively rather than simply defend against it. Active coping strategies involve changing the environment or situation to remove the stressor or reduce the stress you feel.

# I. Psychological Coping Strategies (con't)

## Active Coping Strategies:

1. Hardiness: refers to personality traits of control. These people feel they have the ability to affect the outcome of a situation. They try to achieve goals and solve problems instead of fearing them.
2. Escape and Timing: if you are in a stressful situation you can remove yourself by leaving or by spacing out stressful events over time.



# I. Psychological Coping Strategies (con't)

3. Problem Solving: heading the problem head-on may be the best way to cope. Viewing problems as challenges makes them appear positive. Problem solving means thinking through a situation in a way that leads to a reasonable decision.

*Example:* How could you handle a situation where a major exam is taking place on the same day as a large project is due in another class?

# I. Psychological Coping Strategies (con't)

4. Thinking Style or Explanatory Style:  
Pessimists vs. Optimists—Martin Seligman found that optimists tend to outlive pessimists.
  
5. Progressive Relaxation and Meditation: (Dr. Edmund Jacobson) created a method of relaxation where a person lies down and tenses and relaxes major muscle groups of the body to relieve physical stress. He also had participants envision images and letting them go to relieve mental stress.

# I. Psychological Coping Strategies (con't)

6. Biofeedback: use of machines to help train the user to better regulate and reduce stress in the body.
7. Humor: keeping a sense of humor helps reduce stress as laughing helps reduce tension in the body. Humor allows people to also maintain a proper perspective on situations.





# I. Psychological Coping Strategies (con't)

8. Exercise: physical activity is another constructive way to reduce stress and may help reduce stress hormones.



# I. Psychological Coping Strategies (con't)

9. Support Groups: a groups beyond your personal network. Examples are groups like Alcoholics Anonymous, Weight Watchers, other professionals such as clergy, doctors, psychologists, etc.
  
10. Training: training is advanced preparation for a future possible stressful activity. For example, if you have never golfed you may want to play a round before entering a tournament with friends/coworkers.

# I. Psychological Coping Strategies (con't)

11. Interpersonal Skills Improvement: much stress that people experience comes from other people. Developing good interpersonal skills helps build confidence, self-esteem, helps develop a social network, and reduced the chance of conflict between people.