

## ADAPTATION OF COPING STRATEGIES TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF STRESS AND LONELINES ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF ADULTS

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This comprehensive review investigates the intricacies of coping strategies employed by adults when dealing with stress. It delves into the multifaceted aspects of stress perception, exploring how individuals assess stressors as either threats or demands, and subsequently, how they react to them.

**Methods:** To provide a well-rounded perspective, this review conducted an extensive search of relevant studies from the DOAJ and EBSCOhost databases, focusing on publications from the past decade. The analysis encompasses various facets of stress, including its perception, coping strategies, and the methods used to mitigate its effects.

**Results:** Stress is a highly subjective experience, and its impact varies greatly among individuals. Some individuals perceive stressors as threats, leading to severe consequences, while others view them as challenges that can provoke positive emotional responses. Coping behaviors often stem from learned patterns, influenced by familial and past traumatic experiences. Recognizing and understanding predominant reactions to stress is pivotal in the development of effective coping strategies. Among the most successful coping mechanisms are those centered on problem-solving and seeking social support. Additionally, emotion regulation-oriented coping strategies enable individuals to manage their emotional responses to stressors. Conversely, non-adaptive coping strategies may provide temporary relief but often fail to address the root causes of stress.

**Conclusions:** This review underscores the significance of coping strategies in the context of stress management among adults. Solution-oriented strategies, including active problem-solving and seeking social support, emerge as valuable tools for individuals in their efforts to

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cope with stress. It is essential to recognize that adults have the capacity to choose coping strategies that can effectively mitigate the adverse effects of stress. By comprehending and promoting these strategies, individuals can enhance their stress management skills, leading to improved mental health outcomes and overall well-being.

**Keywords:** stress, coping strategies, coping behaviour, coping methods, coping resources, psychological well-being.

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## ADAPTAÇÃO DE ESTRATÉGIAS DE ENFRENTAMENTO PARA REDUZIR O IMPACTO DO ESTRESSE E DA SOLIDÃO NO BEM-ESTAR PSICOLÓGICO DE ADULTOS

### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Esta revisão abrangente investiga os meandros das estratégias de enfrentamento empregadas por adultos ao lidar com o estresse. Ele investiga os aspectos multifacetados da percepção do estresse, explorando como os indivíduos avaliam os estressores como ameaças ou demandas e, subsequentemente, como reagem a eles.

**Métodos:** Para fornecer uma perspectiva abrangente, esta revisão conduziu uma extensa pesquisa de estudos relevantes nas bases de dados DOAJ e EBSCOhost, com foco em publicações da última década. A análise abrange várias facetas do estresse, incluindo sua percepção, estratégias de enfrentamento e métodos utilizados para mitigar seus efeitos.

**Resultados:** O estresse é uma experiência altamente subjetiva e seu impacto varia muito entre os indivíduos. Alguns indivíduos percebem os estressores como ameaças, levando a consequências graves, enquanto outros os veem como desafios que podem provocar respostas emocionais positivas. Os comportamentos de enfrentamento geralmente resultam de padrões aprendidos, influenciados por experiências traumáticas familiares e passadas. Reconhecer e compreender as reações predominantes ao estresse é fundamental no desenvolvimento de estratégias eficazes de enfrentamento. Entre os mecanismos de enfrentamento mais bem-sucedidos estão aqueles centrados na resolução de problemas e na busca de apoio social. Além disso, estratégias de enfrentamento orientadas para a regulação emocional permitem que os indivíduos gerenciem suas respostas emocionais aos estressores. Por outro lado, estratégias de enfrentamento não adaptativas podem proporcionar alívio temporário, mas muitas vezes não conseguem resolver as causas profundas do estresse.

**Conclusões:** Esta revisão sublinha a importância das estratégias de coping no contexto da gestão do stress entre adultos. Estratégias orientadas para soluções, incluindo a resolução activa de problemas e a procura de apoio social, surgem como ferramentas valiosas para os indivíduos nos seus esforços para lidar com o stress. É essencial reconhecer que os adultos têm a capacidade de escolher estratégias de enfrentamento que possam efetivamente mitigar os efeitos adversos do estresse. Ao compreender e promover estas estratégias, os indivíduos podem melhorar as suas competências de gestão do stress, levando a melhores resultados de saúde mental e bem-estar geral.

**Palavras-chave:** stress, estratégias de coping, comportamento de coping, métodos de coping, recursos de coping, bem-estar psicológico.



## 1 INTRODUCTION

Stress is a natural reaction of our body to external stimuli and it is one of the main risk factors for mental disorders development including major depression (Hankin et al., 2015; Sgoifo et al., 2017; Gradus, 2017). It can be noise; conflict situations at work, at home, with children; death of a relative; divorce; imprisonment; serious illness, and also - paradoxically - a wedding; birth of a child; or promotion. Stress can be caused by anxiety about the inability to pay bills, to provide oneself and one's loved ones with necessary things, problems of social life: economic recession, discrimination, etc. The cause of stress can be almost anything - from a technological disaster to a raindrop falling unexpectedly on your head (Gradus, 2017).

Stress is not WHAT happened to you, but HOW you perceive it. Even one rude word can cause stress. Each of us reacts to stressful situations in our way. What does it feel like? First, there is an overexcitation of the nervous and endocrine system. A person becomes aggressive, irascible, and poorly controlling his emotions. Then the body's resources are depleted, and excitement is replaced by apathy (lowered mood), leading to depression. Performance decreases, weakness, and drowsiness increases, and health deteriorates (Gradus, 2017). There is a relationship between a person's behaviour, personality characteristics, and environment, explaining why some people may be more stressed than others in the same situation (Feng, 2023). Analysis and evaluation of life events have a significant impact on emotional reactions, coping behaviours, and positive or negative adaptation to adverse events. Cognitive appraisals play a key role in mental health outcomes (Padmanabhanunni & Pretorius, 2023). The accumulation of negative reactions to minor stressors is likely to lead to health problems and psychological disorders (Zolkowska & McNeil, 2015). Stress perception is a person's cognitive assessment of the threat posed by stressors and their ability to cope with these threats (Liu et al., 2021). In the process of coping with stressful events, people are prone to several negative emotions, such as anxiety, depression, anger, and pain (Huang et al., 2021). Choosing the right coping strategy is essential for preventing dangerous outcomes, such as the development of posttraumatic stress disorder.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Most often stress is caused by the facts of unpredictability, lack of control and hopelessness. It can be the situation of an exam, the need to go to the boss, public



speaking, traffic jams on the roads and even information on television (Gradus, 2017). Stress has been identified as a precursor to various health problems and is associated with changes in cognitive, behavioural and emotional functioning that can limit decision-making (Dyess et al., 2018). In our high-speed age, everyone is in a hurry to get somewhere, trying to do everything in time. Each person develops his ideas about the world around him, develops a system of requirements, and forms his needs and desires. The discrepancy between reality and our dreams generates dissatisfaction. But it is one thing when it causes a desire to improve and develop further for the sake of achieving the goal, to grow mentally, to understand what stresses teach. It is another thing when there is aggression in the surrounding world, which does not meet expectations. Severe stress can lead to mental trauma and sometimes to serious illness (Hankin et al., 2015; Sgoifo et al., 2017; Gradus, 2017). And sometimes it doesn't need an external influence to cause it, just a single thought is enough. The stressfulness of a situation, first of all, depends on how we treat it (Kim et al., 2017; Campo et al., 2017). Thus, the more positive a person's attitude is, the less stressed he or she is, while a negative attitude is a recipe for stress (Carver & Scheier, 2014; Kim et al., 2017). Every day we encounter negative emotions. For example, the day begins with waking up from the hateful sound of the alarm clock, then a trip on public transportation, bad weather, etc. And many of us treat a state of irritation, i.e. a state of stress, as a norm of life. Many people will find symptoms of stress: impaired concentration, aggressiveness, anxiety without reason, insomnia, and depression.

The human brain does not distinguish between a real threat and a perceived threat, so whenever a situation seems dangerous, it reacts as a real threat. The more often the environment seems hostile, the more time the body remains in a state of alert. Chronic stress is the result of constantly being in an environment full of danger, which is exactly what our unsteady business world is (Yaribeygi et al., 2017). Our body is strong and stable, it has a tremendous ability to recover, but only if the mind works clearly and correctly (Mariotti, 2015). Everything that goes on in our heads, what we think, and what we imagine, affects our condition, and it happens automatically, beyond our consciousness (Crielaard et al., 2021). In general, it is possible to define several categories of stressors that influence a person (Koffer et al., 2019)

The first are stressors that are virtually beyond our control. These include prices, taxes, government, weather, and the habits and personalities of others (Mulska, O., et al.,



2022). *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 20(1), 407-421. doi:10.21511/ppm.20(1).2022.33). Of course, we can get nervous and swear about a power outage or an inept driver who created a traffic jam, but apart from increased blood pressure levels and adrenaline concentrations in the blood, we won't accomplish anything (Tsaras, K., et al., 2018). It is much more effective at this time to apply muscle relaxation techniques, various meditation techniques, breathing exercises or positive visualization techniques. The second category is stressors that we can and should influence. These are our unconstructive actions, inability to set life goals and prioritize, inability to manage our time, and various difficulties in interpersonal interaction. The third category is events and phenomena that we turn into problems (Popovych, I., et al., 2022; Popovych, I., Semenov, O., et al., 2022). Research on mental states of weightlifters' self-regulation readiness for competitions. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 22(5), 1134-1144. doi:10.7752/jpes.2022.05143). Emotional quotient in the structure of mental burnout of athletes. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 22(2), 337-345. doi:10.7752/jpes.2022.02043). This can include all kinds of worries about the future, as well as worries about past events that we cannot change.

The topic of "coping strategies" may not be widely known, but it has been accurately developed and tested. Psychologist Richard Lazarus introduced the concept and offered his diagnosis of how we deal with problematic and difficult situations (Obbarius et al., 2021). The theory of coping behaviour refers to a person's ability to survive stressful situations. Most often coping mechanisms are unconsciously manifested. Coping refers to what you and I do (more often subconsciously) to cope with stress. Although everyone is different, our methods of coping with stress can be generalized. They are most often grouped into two large classes: problem-focused (changing the situation) and emotion-focused (changing emotions). In the first case, in a stressful situation, we try to conceptualize the problem, look for a way out, and are ready for action. In the second case, we only try to return to a good mood (humour, denial of the situation, positive assessment of what is happening, etc.). The main coping strategies are the next (Abouammoh et al., 2020):

1. Confrontation – confronting the current situation. This is an aggressive response. A person perceives the problem in a hostile way and immediately begins to fight it intensively. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. This is the behaviour of Don Quixote, who, without thinking, rushes into battle with "giants". This



strategy has its advantages: if stress is a specific threat, this way you can quickly change the situation for the better. Man – Don Quixote is ready to defend his position at any cost. But confrontation also has significant disadvantages: if the threat is not serious, you can only complicate the situation or further harm yourself. Aggression is difficult to control, hence the difficulty in planning one's deeds and actions.

2. Self-control and the desire to suppress emotions. This is the so-called "Agent 007 technique": do not show your emotions in any way, suppress any negative feelings, do not fight with anyone and do not oppose yourself to anyone. Self-control has a negative side: if there is a situation when you just need to show your anger and emotions to cope with the opponent, this coping strategy will not give the desired result.

3. Search for social support and like-minded people. This method can be tentatively called "cat in boots". In a stressful situation, we urgently need someone to stroke our fur, help us, pity us, tell us that we are cool, and save us. It is appropriate to use coping to solve problems of a personal nature, not to be alone in a difficult moment and to get over grief faster. However, there is a big disadvantage here: the "cat" should be included "to the place", frequent use of this strategy will give you the label of a weak-willed person.

4. Escape from the problem. A vivid example of this strategy is Scarlett from "Gone with the Wind" who said: "I'll think about it tomorrow". Characteristic features: denial or complete ignoring of the problem, avoidance of responsibility, passivity, impatience, outbursts of irritation, immersion in fantasies, overeating, drinking alcohol, etc. Positive side: reduction of emotions in stress. Negative side: lack of problem-solving, accumulation of difficulties, short-term effect.

5. Planning to solve the problem. This is the case when in a stressful situation you immediately wake up Robinson Crusoe, who begins to settle down on his island systematically. This coping strategy is good to use in impending dangerous situations.

6. Positive reappraisal or the desire to see something good in everything. Positive emotions, even in a crisis, can energize us, and turn on the secret "motor". Positive reappraisal is the model of Carlson, who is happy with everything and in difficult moments is ready to calm everyone down: "Calm down, only calm



down". This coping is most effectively used in places where little depends on the person himself: illness, accident, etc. This coping is the most effective way of coping. Trying to find good even in a very bad situation reduces stress, but will not help in a situation where you need to act immediately.

7. Accepting responsibility. This is a superhero strategy. Accepting responsibility is understood as a person's desire to accept all their mistakes, correct them and learn a certain lesson for the future. This method is often used by strong and strong-willed people who in most cases find a way out of the situation.

8. Distancing. The desire to solve the problem at a distance is appropriate when the opponent is in a rage and it is better not to contact him. But if distancing is used in other circumstances, not only will you not solve the problem, but you may make things worse for yourself and others.

The same person depending on the situation, his emotional state and numerous external factors can use different coping options for his defence (Zhao et al., 2022). You can be a brave superhero, you can be like Carlson, calling everyone to calm down – and all this will be the same person, only in different circumstances (Zayed, N. M., et al., 2022). To determine what behaviour a person is drawn to, there are many psychological questionnaires to determine coping strategies and coping tests. One of the most popular is the Lazarus Coping Questionnaire, which was developed back in 1985, or the more recent Stress Coping Behaviour Test. These tools can give a person a rough understanding of his/her coping behaviours but do not rely on them as the results are quite general and may not correspond to reality (McMordie, 2021).

The work aims to analyse different coping strategies for diminishing stress's influence on adult persons and improving their quality of life.

### **3 MATERIALS AND METHODS**

For a comprehensive search, we searched for relevant studies in the DOAJ and EBSCOhost databases over the past decade. To remove a large number of irrelevant papers during the manual search, a selection of terms was created: "stress/coping strategies", or "stress/coping behaviour", or "stress/cognitive assessment", or "stress/coping methods", or "stress/ coping resources, or "stress/protective factors". The same search terms were used for the database (EBSCOhost). The current literature review



includes works that focus on the mechanisms of stress perception, coping strategies and methods.

#### 4 RESULTS

People perceive stress in different ways (Gradius, 2017). They can evaluate it as a threat or as a demand. Severe stress consequences (including emotional burnout) are possible only if the event is perceived by a person as a threat. Perception of an event as a demand can, on the contrary, provoke emotional rise. Some salespeople admit in questionnaires that when everything is smooth in their work, they are even bored. Reactions to stress are automatic, and stress behaviours are often passed on from family or traumatic experiences. To begin with, it is important to recognize which reactions are predominant – to do this, you need to be aware of the moment of stress. The person can also remember past stressful situations, understand what reactions were and identify those that do not suit you, and at the next stress try to control them. For example, during a stressful situation, a person tries to avoid a problem, but otherwise, he/she is a responsible and rational person (Feng, Xu & Lei, 2023). In the future, these strengths can be directed to the resolution of stress – for this, he/she will have to realize the problem and direct your efforts to the solution.

Modern psychologists have proven the direct dependence of emotional burnout on a wrongly chosen coping strategy (McMordie, 2021). Here are some curious facts to note:

1. "Burned-out" professionals more often than "non-burned-out" professionals use such coping strategies as confrontational coping, acceptance of responsibility and escape-avoidance.
2. Search for social support is more often used by "burned-out" representatives of the profession than by "non-burned-out" representatives.
3. High indicators of professional success correspond to high indicators of the strategies "planning of problem-solving", "positive reevaluation", and "acceptance of responsibility" regardless of the level of burnout.
4. High indicators of emotional exhaustion correspond to low indicators of using positive reappraisal. That is, "burned out" professionals are not able to make efforts to create a positive meaning of the problem situation, to direct them to the development of their personality.





Currently, there are more than 400 strategies that can be divided into several categories (Folkman, & Moskowitz, 2004). Now we can define three main groups of coping strategies: the strategy of active problem-solving, where one uses one's resources; the strategy of seeking social support; the strategy of avoidance and maladaptive behaviour, where one escapes from problem-solving by using autoaggression, psychoactive drugs, and alcohol.

**Solution-oriented strategies.** This category includes coping strategies that are used to change the situation itself:

- 1) active coping – specific actions to overcome the stressor or reduce its impact;
- 2) planning – specific thinking about how to cope with the stressor, thinking through steps to overcome the problem;
- 3) suppression of competing activity, preoccupation with the problem - giving up other activities to deal with the stressful situation;
- 4) resting – waiting for a suitable opportunity for action;
- 5) Seeking social support – e.g., advice, financial help, or useful information.

**Emotion regulation-oriented coping strategies.** These coping strategies help to manage the emotional response to problems:

- 1) seeking social support for emotions – turning to loved ones for moral support;
- 2) positive reappraisal – being able to turn the situation around so that stressful events can be interpreted as helpful. For example, seeing divorce as an opportunity to meet one's love;
- 3) radical acceptance – the ability to recognize the reality of a stressful situation without shutting down or deceiving oneself;
- 4) withdrawal and avoidance – refusing to believe that the stressful event has happened and trying to live as if it doesn't exist;
- 5) self-control – trying to monitor and contain one's emotions in response to stress;
- 6) turning to religion – attempting to find solace in religious practices;
- 7) humour – attempting to cope with negative emotions through laughter.

**Non-adaptive strategies.** There are also a few popular coping strategies that may not have the best effect on a person's life:



- 1) spewing negativity – trying to focus on the experience and express negative emotions;
- 2) lack of engagement in action – unwillingness to deal with the stressor, even if it means giving up on the goal;
- 3) lack of engagement in thoughts – any action for the sake of distraction from the stressor. The most common of these are watching videos, daydreaming, and sleeping;
- 4) use of chemicals – taking alcohol or illicit drugs to improve emotional well-being;
- 5) social withdrawal – distancing oneself from other people.

There are functional and dysfunctional coping styles (Chao, & Wang, 2013). Functional includes direct attempts to cope with the problem, with or without the help of others. Dysfunctional or "avoidant coping" represents the use of unproductive strategies. The choice of coping behaviour strategy style is influenced by the characteristics of the situation and perceived control over it, as well as by personality traits. Criteria that show effective coping with stress: the situation loses its negative significance, depression, anxiety, irritability, psychosomatic symptoms decrease, and adaptive resources increase (Bendezú, Sarah, & Martha, 2016).

In the theory of coping behaviour, the mechanisms of coping with stress that determine the development of various forms of behaviour that lead to adaptation or maladaptation of the individual are important. As a result of theoretical and experimental studies, it has been shown that to cope with stress, each person uses his or her strategies (coping strategies) based on his or her personal experience and psychological reserves (personal resources or coping resources). Therefore, stress-coping behaviour began to be considered as a result of interaction between coping strategies and coping resources (Taylor, & Stanton, 2007). Behavioural coping strategies are divided into active and passive, adaptive and maladaptive (Wadsworth, 2015; Holton, Barry, & Chaney, 2015). Active coping strategies include the strategy "problem solving" as a basic coping strategy, including all variants of human behaviour aimed at solving a problematic or stressful situation and the strategy "search for social support", including behaviour aimed at obtaining social support from the environment. Passive coping behaviour includes variants of behaviour that include the basic coping strategy "avoidance" (Wadsworth, 2015; Holton, Barry & Chaney, 2015), although some forms of avoidance can be active.



Personality-mediated adaptive resources (coping resources) include the level of cognitive development, the presence of a socially supportive network and its effectiveness, as well as psychological features of personality that provide stress resistance (Taylor & Stanton, 2007). Studies of psychological stress have reflected the problem of psychoprotective mechanisms closely related to coping behaviour, which is understood as strategies of actions taken by an individual mainly consciously and actively to overcome stressful states and negative experiences. The success of personal adaptation to stress is determined by the level of development of coping behaviour, which is regulated through the use of one's behavioural strategies (coping strategies) based on personal experience and environmental coping resources (Taylor & Stanton, 2007). Coping strategies are considered as actual responses of a person to a perceived threat, as a way of stressor management. Their development is facilitated by coping resources, which are relatively stable personal and social characteristics that provide a psychological background for overcoming emotional stress (Holton, Barry & Chaney, 2015). Most authors consider coping behaviour as a type of human social behaviour, the phenomenon of which is to get used to or evade the demands of a crisis (extreme) situation, and possibly to prevent it by timely unravelling its intractability or danger (Taylor & Stanton, 2007; Holton, Barry & Chaney, 2015).

P. Lazarus and S. Folkman and others in their psychological works began to develop the concept of psychological stress, which in contrast to physiological highly stereotyped (algorithmic) stress reaction to harm (threatening, extreme factor), is considered as a reaction mediated by threat assessment and internal psychological processes (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Obbarius et al., 2021). In this regard, R. Lazarus noted that not any environmental requirement causes stress, but only that which is evaluated as threatening. Among psychologists, there was already a tendency that can be labelled as "denial of non-specificity of situations generating stress". In the theory of stress and coping of R. Lazarus, important importance is given to the mechanisms of stress coping, which determine the development of various forms of behaviour that lead to adaptation or maladaptation of a personality. P. Lazarus repeatedly emphasized that the ability to overcome stress, in most cases, is more important than the nature, magnitude, and frequency of stress exposure. Therefore, behaviour aimed at eliminating or reducing the strength of the impact of a stressful factor on a person has been called "coping behaviour" or coping (stress-coping) behaviour (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).



To date, there are three main approaches to understanding the definition of "coping". The ego-oriented approach, originating in the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud and works on the analysis of defence mechanisms by Lina Freud, in which the process of coping (coping process) is considered as a specific ego-mechanism aimed at productive adaptation of the personality in difficult situations, which a person resorts to to get rid of internal tension (Haan, 1993). The functioning of coping processes implies the inclusion of cognitive, moral, social and motivational structures of the personality for coping with the problem and overcoming the stress caused by it. In the case of the inability of a personality to adequately overcome the problem, defence mechanisms are included, contributing to passive adaptation. Therefore, defence mechanisms are defined by the authors mentioned earlier as rigid, maladaptive ways of coping with the problem, preventing adequate orientation of an individual in real reality. Otherwise, coping and defence function based on the same ego processes, but are, according to N. Haan, dissimilar (Haan, 1993). According to the second concept, coping is conditioned by relatively stable personal prerequisites that predetermine a person's reaction to a particular stressor. According to this theory, it is the stable personality traits that are the main factor predetermining a person's choice of this or that way of behaviour in a stressful situation. A. G. Billings and R. H. Moos (1984) identified three ways of coping with a stressful situation: assessment of the situation; intervention in the situation; avoidance and distinguishing between active and passive ways of responding to stress, with the former being considered a manifestation of constructive behaviour, the latter unconstructive (Billings & Moos, 1984). R. Lazarus and S. Folkman developed a cognitive-phenomenological theory of coping with stress, which belongs to the third direction and is currently the most widespread. According to the third concept, coping acts as a dynamic process, which is determined by the subjectivity of experiencing the situation and many other factors.

The theory of coping with stress is based on the premise that coping is a dynamic process, depending on the specifics of the situation, the phase of encounter with the stress factor, and the cognitive assessment of the stressor by the person himself. R. Lazarus and S. Folkman defined psychological coping as the cognitive and behavioural efforts of the individual aimed at reducing the impact of stress (Obbarius et al., 2021). An active form of coping behaviour, or active overcoming, is the purposeful elimination or change of the influence of a stressful situation, weakening the stress connection of an individual with



his environment. Passive coping behaviour or passive overcoming is defined as intrapsychic ways of coping with stress using a different arsenal of psychological defence mechanisms, which are aimed at reducing emotional stress rather than changing the stressful situation. As a result of theoretical and experimental studies, it was shown that to cope with stress, each person uses his strategies (coping strategies) based on his personal experience (personal resources or coping resources). Therefore, coping (stress-overcoming) behaviour began to be considered as the result of the interaction of coping strategies and coping resources. Coping strategies are ways to manage a stressor that arises as an individual's response to a perceived threat; coping resources are relatively stable characteristics of people and society and contribute to the development of ways to cope with it. The success of adaptation to life stress is determined by the effectiveness of the development of coping resources (Obbarius et al., 2021). Low development of coping resources contributes to the formation of passive maladaptive coping behaviour, social isolation and disintegration of the individual in difficult, stressful or extreme situations. S. Folkman identifies the following types of coping resources: physical (health, performance, endurance, etc.), psychological (beliefs, self-esteem, locus of control, morality, will, etc.), social (individual social network – family, friends and other types of social support system) and divides them into two types of coping resources: personal and environmental. Currently, the coping resources of an individual include the development of the cognitive sphere, which allows one to adequately assess the impact of the stress factor and the social environment surrounding the person; a person's ideas about himself (Self-concept); the ability to control one's life and take responsibility for it (internal locus of control); the ability to communicate with others, a certain social competence, the desire to be with people (affiliation); the ability to empathize with others, to live with them some part of their life, while accumulating one's own experience (empathy); a person's position about life, death, love, loneliness, faith, human spirituality, faith in God, etc.; volitional and value motivational structure of the individual. The resources of the social environment also determine human behaviour. These include: the social support system or social support network is the environment in which a person lives, i.e. his micro environment – family, friends, and macro environment – society as a whole. The social support process, which is also a resource for coping with stress, is the presence of a social support network, the ability to find and perceive (use) it, as well as the ability to provide social support. Thus, in the cognitive theory of stress, R. Lazarus and his followers, human behaviour is



considered not simply as a result of the influence of the social environment, but as the emergence of certain behavioural strategies of the individual as a result of the refraction of environmental requirements through certain personal experiences (Obbarius et al., 2021). Currently, gradually focusing the attention of researchers on how people respond to stress, and how they overcome it, is becoming an important area of prevention of various somatic and psychosomatic diseases. The concept of coping becomes one of the central aspects of modern stress theory, and coping – overcoming stress – begins to be seen as a stabilizing factor that can help an individual maintain psychosocial adaptation during periods of stress or, more precisely, stress factors. The work of R.S. Lazarus and S. Folkman noted that the interaction between the environment and the individual is regulated by two key processes: cognitive assessment and “coping” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Obbarius et al., 2021). This is because, in the process of human evolution, it is the cognitive assessment of the situation (problem) that plays an important role. A person overcomes difficulties by assessing their significance for himself, and the intensity and nature of the emotions that a person expresses when encountering various problems depend on this. As is known, emotions regulate two main types of human activity. The first is an informational cognitive activity, which determines our knowledge, thoughts about the world, and ideas about how it functions. The second is evaluative cognitive activity, as a result of which a piece of information is determined that must be extracted and is important for the well-being of a particular individual – “What does this mean for me?”. In addition, there are two types of cognitive activity – primary and secondary assessment. Primary appraisal relates to information about what has happened that affects the individual's well-being. Lazarus and S.Folkman, characterize three types of stress – harm (damage), reflecting a connection with previous experience; a threat reflecting anticipated damage and a challenge addressed to the potential resources of the individual (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Obbarius et al., 2021). There is a hypothesis that the evaluation of an event depends on the amount of resources available to the individual to cope with this event. In this case, if an individual evaluates resources as insufficient, or inadequate, then the event is perceived by him as a threat. Typically, individuals who are resistant to stress adequately assess their resources and perceive stressful events as changeable. The initial assessment allows the individual to decide whether a given situation is threatening or whether it relates to a situation of change that does not contain a threat to his well-being. It allows you to assess the strength of the stress impact and



compare the possibility of harm caused by it with the constitution of the individual. As N. Haan notes, the secondary assessment complements the primary assessment. It determines what methods can be used to influence a negative event and its outcome, that is, it determines the process of choosing mechanisms and resources for coping with stress (Haan, 1993). With its help, a person decides what he can do in a given situation. After a cognitive assessment of the situation, a person begins to develop mechanisms for coping with stress, i. e. the coping process. If in animals the behavioural response to stress or adverse environmental influences is manifested primarily by avoidance, withdrawal from a threatening situation or aggression, then in humans, when overcoming stress, the cognitive thought processes of making an adaptive decision are activated. R. Lazarus distinguishes three main types of strategies for coping with a threatening situation: 1) ego defence mechanisms; 2) direct action – attack or flight, which is accompanied by anger, aggression or fear; 3) coping without effect when there is no real threat, but potentially exists (Lazarus, 1993). R. Lazarus and S. Folkman note that coping performs two main functions: regulating emotions (emotion-focused coping) and managing problems that cause distress (problem-focused coping). Both of these functions are used by a person in most stressful situations. Their quantitative ratio depends on how stressful situations are assessed, i. e. from their cognitive assessment by a specific person (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Obbarius et al., 2021). A. G. Billings and R. H. Moos distinguish three types of coping: evaluation-oriented coping; problem-focused coping; and emotion-focused coping (Billings & Moos, 1984). Let's look at them briefly. These authors view assessment-focused coping as coping with stress, which includes attempts to determine the meaning of the situation and put strategies into action – logical analysis, cognitive reappraisal, etc. Problem-focused coping by A. G. Billings and R. H. Moos (1984) is considered as stress management, which aims to modify, reduce or eliminate the source of stress. They define emotion-focused coping as coping with stress, which includes cognitive and behavioural efforts through which a particular person tries to reduce emotional stress and maintain affective balance (Billings & Moos, 1984). There is a theory that considers the concept of “coping” or “overcoming stress” as the activity of an individual to maintain or maintain a balance between the demands of the environment and the resources that satisfy these requirements. In his early works, R.S. Lazarus defines “coping” as a cognitive activity that includes the assessment of perceived damage, and harm (primary assessment) and the assessment of certain actions to overcome the harm



(secondary assessment). The process of overcoming stress (coping process) is carried out through the use of various behavioural strategies based on personal and environmental coping resources. Most authors divide behavioural coping strategies into active and passive (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Obbarius et al., 2021). Active strategies include the “problem resolution” strategy, as a basic coping strategy, which includes all human behaviour options aimed at resolving a problem and/or stressful situation, and the “social support seeking” strategy, which includes behaviour aimed at obtaining social support. Passive coping behaviour includes behaviour that includes “avoidance” in the basic coping strategy, although, as is known, some forms of avoidance can also be active. Thus, at present, the basic strategies of stress-overcoming behaviour (coping strategies) include three main strategies – “problem resolution”, “seeking social support” and “avoidance”. At the same time, in foreign psychological and psychotherapeutic scientific literature, psychological defence is defined as a concept close to coping behaviour (from English to cope – “to cope”). The task of coping behaviour is to either overcome difficulties, reduce their negative consequences, avoid these difficulties, or simply ignore their presence. Unlike unconscious, passive mechanisms of psychological defence, coping mechanisms are recognized by the individual. They are constructive, flexible, adapted to requirements, aimed at actively resolving a problem situation and a strategy for seeking social support from the environment. Despite the increased scientific interest in the problems of an individual’s defensive-coping behaviour in recent years, in domestic science these issues have not been sufficiently studied both at the theoretical and empirical levels, as many Russian psychologists have repeatedly pointed out.

According to R. Lazarus and S. Folkman, as noted earlier, coping performs two main functions: regulating emotions (emotion-focused coping) and managing problems that cause distress (problem-focused coping). These functions are used in most stressful situations, and the proportional representation of each function varies depending on how the stressful situations are assessed. Emotion-focused coping is defined as cognitive, emotional and behavioural efforts through which a person tries to reduce emotional tension, the emotional component of distress. The efforts with which a person tries to eliminate a threat (the influence of a stressor) are defined as coping aimed at the problem. In this regard, the concept of “coping” or “overcoming stress” is considered by R. Lazarus as an individual’s activity to maintain or maintain a balance between the demands of the





environment and the resources that satisfy these requirements under stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Obbarius et al., 2021).

## 5 DISCUSSION

The problem of stress was initially considered from the standpoint of analyzing the intensity of the influencing stress factors. Different people who are exposed to the same level of stress or adverse circumstances will not necessarily have the same response to negative environmental conditions. Differential vulnerability is the concept that personal and environmental coping resources provide differential responses to adverse circumstances. Examples of variables that make people differentially vulnerable to adversity are social support (Szkody et al., 2021), willingness to use social support (Padmanabhanunni et al., 2023), locus of control (Pedron et al., 2021; Strong, 2020), problem-solving appraisal (Heppner et al., 2019), safety appraisal (Padmanabhanunni et al., 2017), and career vocation (Wu et al., 2019). However, psychologists have overcome the contradiction between “the nonspecificity of stress as a reaction to any influence” (Selye) and “the dependence of the reaction on the psychological assessment of the threat” (Lazarus) in favour of the latter statement. The scope of the concept of “stress”, thanks to the work of psychologists, was sharply narrowed towards extremes and more personally oriented. To remove the contradiction between physiological nonspecificity and psychological selectivity of R. Lazarus introduces the concept of “coping” as the ability to overcome stress, or rather cope with it. In the theory of stress and coping, mechanisms for overcoming stress are important, determining the development of various forms of behaviour leading to adaptation or maladaptation of the individual. As a result of research, it has been shown that to cope with stress, each person uses his strategies (coping strategies) based on his personal experience (personal resources or coping resources). Therefore, coping (stress-overcoming) behaviour began to be considered as a result of the interaction of coping strategies and coping resources. Coping strategies are ways to manage a stress factor that arises as an individual’s response to a perceived threat. Coping resources are relatively stable characteristic of people and stress and contribute to the development of ways of coping with it. Psychologists have identified the following types of coping resources: physical (health, endurance, etc.), psychological (beliefs, self-esteem, locus of control, morality, etc.), social (individual social network and other types of social support system) and subdivided them into two types of coping resources:



personal and environmental. Currently, an individual's coping resources include the development of the cognitive sphere, which allows one to assess the impact of the social environment surrounding a person; a person's ideas about himself (I-concept); the ability to control one's life and take responsibility for it (internal locus of control); ability to communicate with others, certain social competence, affiliation; the ability to empathize while accumulating one's own experience (empathy); a person's position about life, death, love, loneliness, faith, human spirituality, etc.; value motivational structure of the individual. The resources of the social environment also determine human behaviour. These include: the social support system or social support network is the environment in which a person lives (family, society).

In modern realities, a person is often faced with various factors that lead to irritation and even stress. When faced with stress, everyone tries to solve this problem in their way. Such decisions have their name – coping strategies. Psychologists consider this term to be an action that a person takes to get out of an unpleasant state and situation. In short, a person's way of coping with difficult life situations. This concept implies three strategies: behavioural, emotional and cognitive, that is, they occur at the level of a person's actions, feelings and thoughts. Each of them has its positive and negative sides. The techniques are easy to use, but they are not universal. Therefore, everyone can choose for themselves exactly what they like, what suits them best or what helps them.

Stress can be reduced or even prevented by distracting oneself from the situation. Switch your thoughts to another subject. So, if you constantly think about an event that made a strong negative impression on you, stressing yourself out, and giving all your energy to these thoughts, then you are creating a stressful situation for yourself that can lead to psychological trauma. Try to look at the situation with a sense of humour. Laughter leads to a decrease in anxiety, muscles relax, and heartbeat and blood pressure normalize. Stress is a source of very strong energy, which means the body requires action. One can use the gym, where you can work out until you sweat, you can tidy up your apartment, beat a pillow, smash dishes, violently beat your mattress with a tennis racket, etc. This energy cannot be suppressed. Just act, and do whatever you want, but preferably for the benefit of yourself and your family. Another way to deal with stress is relaxation. Using this method, you can partially or completely get rid of physical or mental stress. It is easy to master these methods, but your motivation is very important, i.e. desire and understanding of why you need it. The goal of the exercises is complete relaxation.



Some people lose their appetite due to stress and begin to lose weight because the biological reactions that trigger stress consume a lot of energy. But for most people, stress causes the opposite reaction; they start eating more and eat stress. They eat more chocolate, cakes, sweets, and other foods rich in sugar and fat.

All coping strategies interfere with problem-solving, lower self-esteem, and cause distress. How to choose the best coping strategy for coping with stress. There is no one-size-fits-all coping strategy that will work for every person and be useful in every situation. To choose the best approach, it is important to consider several factors.

Focus on personality traits. The strategy must be not only adaptive but also suitable for a person. Extroverts and people with high levels of conscientiousness – conscientious, competent, and disciplined – were more likely to actively solve problems and use positive reappraisal. But persons with high levels of neuroticism – anxious, shy and prone to negativity – resort to emotion-focused strategies and support-seeking.

When choosing stress management techniques, it's important to assess whether they are right for a person. For example, one person may benefit from a strategy of self-control – to help calm down and start acting, while another will only get increased anxiety and nervous breakdown.

Consider the peculiarities of the situation and change strategies. Since life situations are different, the same productive strategies can be more or less advantageous. Therefore, it is important not only to choose adaptive methods but also to develop a flexible approach to applying them. When people do not control the source of stress, such as in an epidemic, adaptive emotional coping helps better than problem-solving strategies.

The importance of choosing the right strategies is also confirmed in scientific research.

How to change coping strategies? To begin with, it's worth sorting out what coping strategies a person is using now. Since the stress response is largely automatic, he/she will have to be as conscious as possible to notice his/her habits.

First of all, he/she would analyse several stressful situations and write out those actions that he/she considers ineffective. For example, these could be avoidance strategies: eating, drinking alcohol, and fantasizing. Or hypercompensation coping: excessive perfectionism, provocative behaviour. Every person has the resources to live with stress. Also, a very effective tool for changing coping strategies is the development of mindfulness. This is the ability to notice one's state, including thoughts, emotions and



bodily manifestations. For example, 14 days of mindfulness meditation helped students develop flexibility in their coping choices. Through these practices, they learned to understand what would work best in a particular stressful situation.

Coping strategies aimed at active resolution of a problem situation:

- active actions to eliminate the source of stress
- planning of one's actions about the problem situation
- seeking help or advice from one's environment
- evaluating the situation from the point of view of its positive aspects and treating it as one of the episodes from one's life experience
- recognizing the reality of the situation
- Non-active coping, contributing to adaptation to the stressful situation:
  - seeking sympathy and understanding from others
  - reducing activity about other cases and problems and fully focusing on the source of stress
  - waiting for more favourable conditions to resolve the situation
  - reacting emotionally in a problematic situation
  - denial of the stressful event
  - psychological distraction from the source of stress through entertainment, places, sleep, etc.
  - refusal to resolve the situation

Thus, there are many ways of coping with stress, but active and functional coping strategies contribute to problem-solving and adaptation to the situation.

The quality of one's life and his /her well-being are highly dependent on the capacity of a person to deal with stressful events in his / her life. There are many ways of coping with stress, but active and functional coping strategies contribute to problem-solving and adaptation to the situation. The capacity to cope with problems, with stress by him-/herself is a crucial mark of one's self-sufficiency. Choosing solution-oriented coping strategies is the best way to deal with stress and to ameliorate human well-being if we speak about really adult, mature not infantile people. The sense of loneliness is a sign of an infantile person and a person has to deal with it with the help of a psychologist using different variants of psychotherapy such as Hibuki-therapy or any type of body-oriented practices, which help to increase oxytocin and endorphin levels, decrease cortisol level and give the sense of happiness to improve their well-being (Vittner, et al., 2018;



Yu, et al., 2022; Maksimov (Sharon), D., 2022). A happy one is never alone and never feels lonely.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

Having analysed different coping strategies, we concluded that solution-oriented strategies show various advantages in comparison with emotion regulation-oriented coping strategies and non-adaptive strategies, which are typical for infantile persons. Notwithstanding that the choosing of coping strategy depends on various factors, including previous experience, individual peculiarities of character, examples of family members' reaction, etc., a really adult person can behave himself as he finds to diminish stress harmful effect. Emotion regulation-oriented coping strategies and non-adaptive strategies do not solve the problem, they can simply give an illusion of its absence or form a sense, that it is not so serious.



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