

Quadrant II – Transcript and Related Materials

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Module Name: Constructive Coping: Appraisal-Focused Coping- II

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Notes:

- **Introduction to constructive coping**
 - The term constructive coping can be used to refer to efforts to deal with stressful events that are judged to be relatively healthful.
 - It conveys:
 - A healthy, positive connotation, without promising success
 - Confronting problems directly
 - Reasonably realistic appraisals of your stress and coping resources
 - Learning to recognize and manage potentially disruptive emotional reactions to stress.
 - Learning to exert some control over potentially harmful or destructive habitual behaviors and the acquisition of some behavioral self-control.
- **Appraisal-Focused Constructive Coping**
 - Can be defined as a useful way to deal with stress by altering one's appraisals of threatening events.
 - Some appraisal focused constructive coping strategies are:

- Albert Ellis's ideas about reappraisal
 - Using humor and positive reinterpretation to cope with stress
- **Humor as a Stress Reducer**
 - **CASE:**
 - The Chicago area had its worst flooding in nearly a century a few years ago. Thousands of people's homes were destroyed as two rivers overflowed their banks.
 - As the floodwaters receded, flood victims coming home were treated to the expected television interviews.
 - Surrounded by the ruins of their homes, a surprising number of victims, joked about their misfortune.
 - When the going gets tough, it may pay to laugh about it.
 - In a study of coping styles, McCrae (1984) found that 40 percent of his subjects reported using humor to deal with stress.
 - Empirical evidence shows that humor moderates the impact of stress
 - For instance, in one influential study, Martin and Lefcourt (1983) found that a good sense of humor functioned as a buffer to lessen the negative impact of stress on mood.
 - Similar findings have been observed in other studies (Abel, 1998; Martin, 1996).
 - Although there are some inconsistencies in the data, researchers have also found an association between humor and enhanced immune function, greater pain tolerance, and fewer symptoms of illness (Martin, 2001).
 - **HOW DOES HUMOR HELP TO REDUCE THE EFFECTS OF STRESS AND PROMOTE WELLNESS?**
 - One possibility is that humor affects appraisals of stressful events
 - Jokes can help people put a less-threatening spin on their trials and tribulations.

- Another possibility is that humor increases the experience of positive emotions; and positive emotions can help people bounce back from stressful events (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004).
- Another hypothesis is that a good sense of humor facilitates positive social interactions, which promote social support, which is known to buffer the effects of stress (Martin, 2002).
- Finally, Lefcourt and colleagues (1995) argue that high-humor people may benefit from not taking themselves as seriously as low-humor people do.
- As they put it, “If persons do not regard themselves too seriously and do not have an inflated sense of self-importance, then defeats, embarrassments, and even tragedies should have less pervasive emotional consequences for them”
- Thus, humor is a rather versatile coping strategy that may have many benefits.
- **Positive Reinterpretation**
 - When you are feeling overwhelmed by life’s difficulties, you might try the commonsense strategy of recognizing that “things could be worse.”
 - No matter how bad your circumstances appear to be, you almost certainly know someone who is experiencing even worse difficulties.
 - That isn't to argue that you should take pleasure in other people's suffering.
 - Comparing your situation to those of others who are facing much more difficult challenges, on the other hand, can help you put your troubles into perspective.
 - Research suggests that this strategy of making positive comparisons with others is a common coping mechanism that can result in improved mood and self-esteem
 - This strategy does not depend on knowing others who are clearly worse off.

- You can simply imagine yourself in a similar situation with an even worse outcome (example: two broken legs after a horse-riding accident instead of just one).
- One healthy aspect of positive reinterpretation is that it can facilitate calming reappraisals of stress without the necessity of distorting reality.
- Another way to engage in positive reinterpretation is to search for something good in a bad experience.
- Distressing though they may be, many setbacks have positive elements.
- After experiencing divorces, illnesses, firings, financial losses, and such, many people remark that “I came out of the experience better than I went in,” or “I grew as a person.”
- Studies of victims of natural disasters, heart attacks, and bereavement have found an association between this type of benefit finding under duress and relatively sound psychological and physical health (Tennen & Affleck, 2002).
- Of course, the positive aspects of a personal setback may be easy to see after the stressful event is behind you.
- The challenge is to recognize these positive aspects while you are still struggling with the setback, so that it becomes less stressful.
- **Summary of Key Terms**
 - Appraisal-focused coping is a constructive coping strategy – a way to deal with stress by altering one’s appraisals of threatening events.
 - Some appraisal focused constructive coping strategies are:
 - Albert Ellis’s ideas about reappraisal
 - Using humor and positive reinterpretation to cope with stress
- **Reference**
 - Weiten, W. & Lloyd, M.A (2007). *Psychology applied to modern life*. New Delhi: Thomson Delmar Learning. Pp. 115-118.