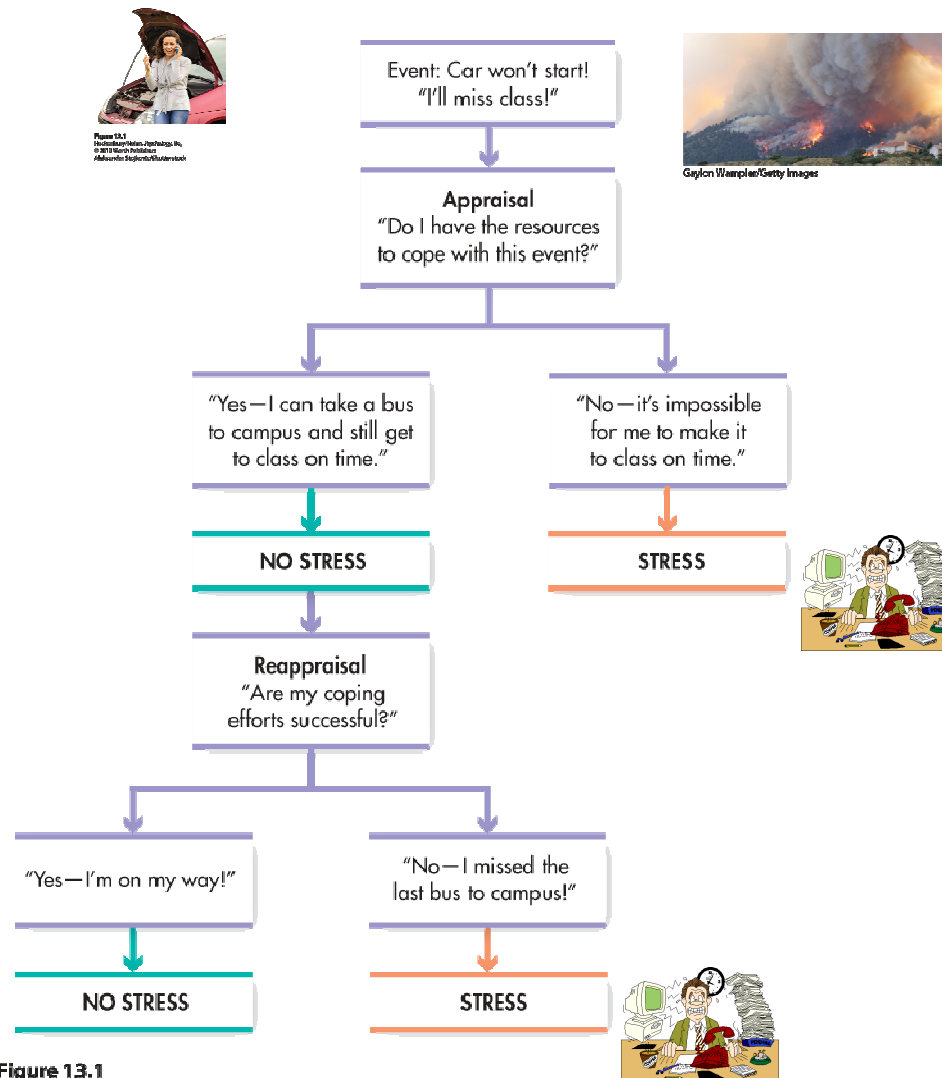


Stress and Appraisal



Coping

Behavioral and cognitive responses used to deal with stressors; involves our efforts to change circumstances, or our interpretation of circumstances, to make them more favorable and less threatening ([page 510](#)).

When coping is effective, we adapt to the situation and stress can be reduced. Maladaptive coping can involve thoughts that intensify or prolong stress ([page 510](#)).

Adaptive coping involves realistically evaluating the situation and determining what can be done to minimize the impact of the stressors, developing emotional tolerance for negative life events, and preserving important relationships ([page 510](#)).

Traditionally, there are two broad categories of coping

- Problem-focused coping
- Emotion-focused coping

Problem-focused Coping

Problem-focused coping: Coping efforts primarily aimed at directly changing or managing a threatening or harmful stressor ([page 511](#)).

- Planning problem solving: Rationally analyzing the situation, identifying potential solutions and implementing them ([page 512](#)). Also see chapter 7 on problem solving.
 - I'll file for unemployment and start looking in the newspaper check out the employment department
- Confrontive coping: Tackling a problem head on that is direct and assertive, but not hostile or angry ([page 512](#)).
 - I know that being unemployed displeases my parents, but I'll tell them my side of the story and I don't want them to get on my case because that will just make me angry and less efficient in finding a new job.

In general, problem-focused coping and seeking social support are more often associated with favorable adjustment when dealing with stress. Reliance on emotional-focused coping can be maladaptive if it keeps us from changing situation is which we actually do have control over.

Emotion-focused Coping

Problem-focused coping may not be adaptive to cope with a stressor in situations that we cannot influence or modify. In these cases, problem-solving strategies can do more harm than good (_____-_____ can develop). Likewise, if we don't understand the nature of the problem or don't take the effort to understand the world around us, we might engage in more emotion-focused coping.

Sometimes we cannot change the situation, but may be able to change our emotional response to the situation.

- A student had to go in for some medical tests. The results would not be known for several days. To reduce the stress, he would exercise more, play games with his children and distract himself from thinking about the outcome of these medical tests.

Emotion-focused coping: Coping efforts primarily aimed at relieving or regulating the emotional impact of a stressful situation. Emotion-focused coping doesn't change the problem, it can help you feel better about it ([page 512](#)).

Emotion-focused coping

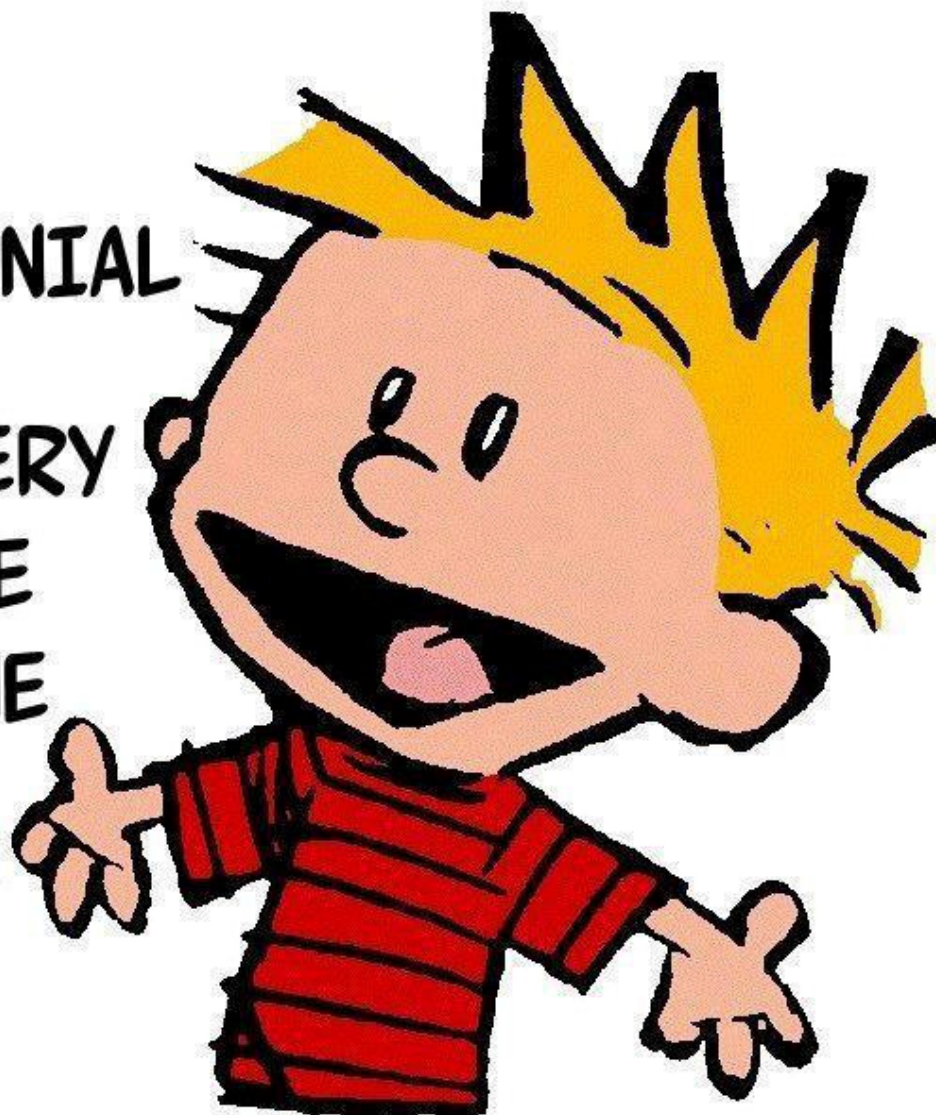
Your textbook covers several types of emotion-focused coping including

- **Escape-avoidance**: Escaping or avoiding the stressor to reduce the emotional impact.
 - Getting fired sucks, so I am not going to think about it (getting drunk, spending money, taking a vacation etc.)
- **Seeking social support**: Turning to friends.
- **Distancing**: Acknowledging the stressor, but attempting to minimize or eliminate the emotional impact.
- **Denial**: Refusing to acknowledge the problem exists.
 - I didn't get fired. (show denial clips)
- **Positive reappraisal**: We minimize the negative emotional aspects, but create positive meaning by focusing on personal growth.
- **Positive religious coping**: Seeking comfort in prayer from a religious community or believing that your personal experiences are spiritually meaningful.
- **Negative religious coping**: Becoming angry, questioning your religious beliefs or believe that you are being punished.
- **Ego defense mechanism**: (see Chapter 11: Personality)

"More people would
learn from their
mistakes if they
weren't so busy
denying them"

IT'S NOT DENIAL

I'M JUST VERY
SELECTIVE
ABOUT THE
REALITY
I ACCEPT



Emotion-focused coping

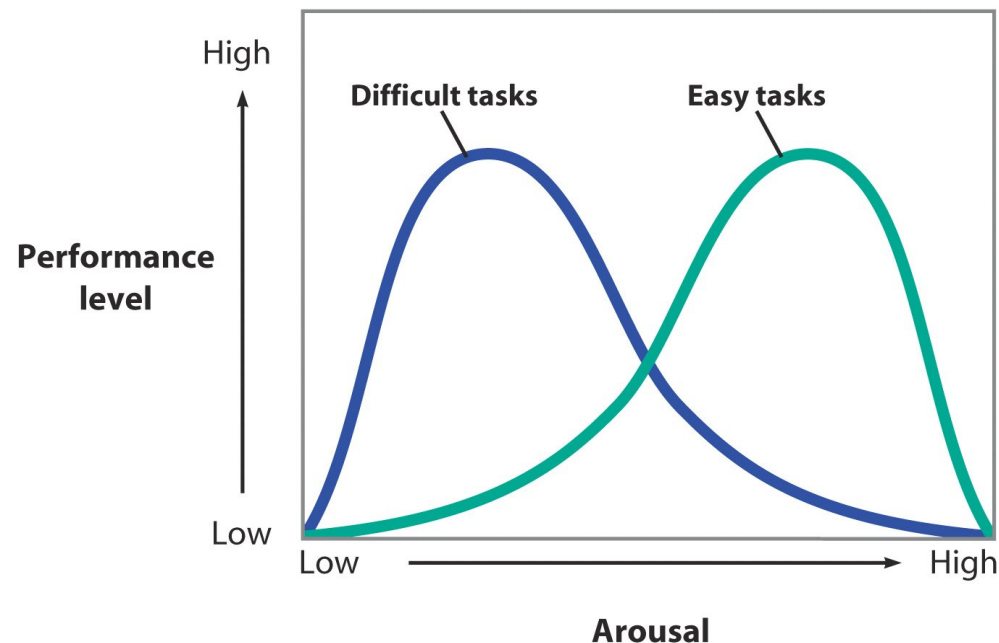
Emotion-focused coping: Coping efforts primarily aimed at relieving or regulating the emotional impact of a stressful situation. Emotion-focused coping doesn't change the problem, it can help you feel better about it ([page 512](#)).

- Emotion focused coping may be useful in the short-term, but not the long-term.
- Emotion focus coping may be more useful for stressors you CANNOT control.
- Across many different types of stressors, emotion-focused strategies that involve avoidance, denial, and wishful thinking appear to be related with less effective adaptive behavior.
- Emotion-focused coping strategies that involved avoiding feelings, predicted depression and poorer adjustment.
- However, strategies such as identifying and changing irrational and negative thinking and learning relaxation skills to control arousal, thus can reduce the effects of stress without avoiding or distorting reality can be effective in dealing with stress.

Not addressing the underlying problem may be adaptive in the short-term, but in the long-term makes your ability to function more difficult, learn new skills, and expand your experience of life.

Emotion Focused Coping and Performance

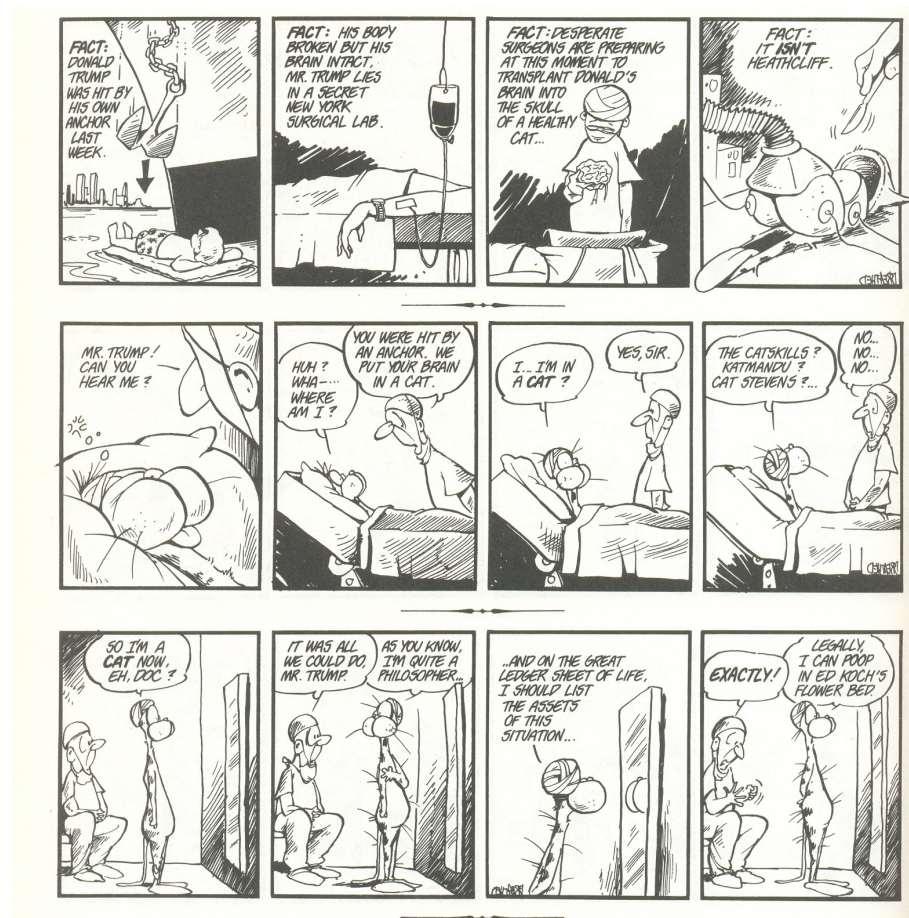
Stress can create physiological arousal of the body. If the task or activity you are trying to accomplish is difficult (taking tests, new skills, etc.) stress and arousal can impair performance.



Emotion-focused coping can help reduce arousal levels that will allow you to be successful. Practice can make difficult tasks easier so arousal won't impair your performance as much.

Emotion-focused Coping: Positive Reappraisal

Instead of avoiding a stressor or rationally dealing with it, we can change the way that you think about the stressor is one way to cope.



Emotion-focused Coping: Positive Reappraisal

For the first time, Remo notices that Chun wears glasses to watch television

Remo Williams: Ha!! You can't see

Chun: I can see fine

Remo Williams: Then why do you wear glasses

Chun (confidently) I wear glasses so that I may see more

Emotion-focused Coping: Positive Reappraisal

CHANGE YOUR MINDSET DURING COVID-19



Instead of thinking:

Think:

I am stuck in the house.



I am safe in my home, spending time with my family.

I am going to run out of food.



I am prepared with everything I need for now and will plan to use items wisely.

I am scared that I will get sick.



I will do everything in my control to keep myself and my family healthy.

This will never end.



This will pass and I will have a newfound appreciation for things I once took for granted.

Everywhere is closing. How will I get the things I need?



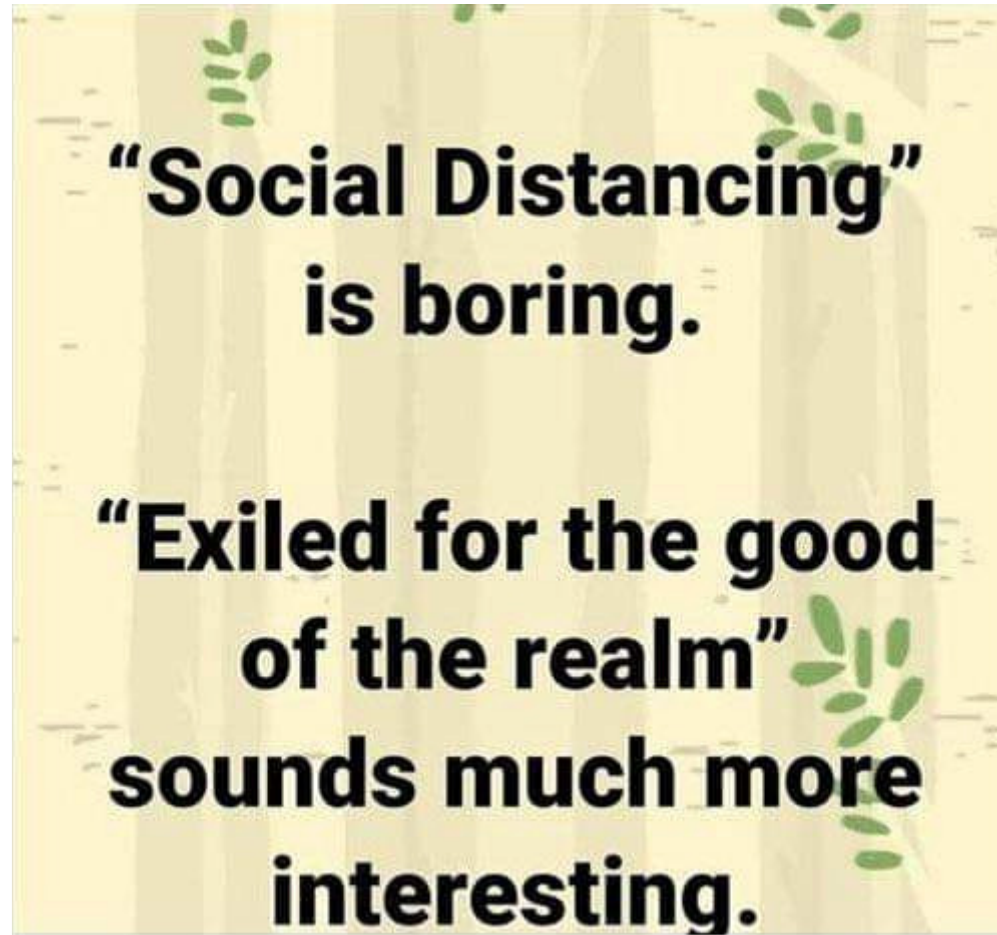
Essential places, like the grocery stores, hospitals and pharmacies, will remain open.

This is ruining all of my spring plans.



It is what it is and beyond my control. I will reschedule when I am able to.

Emotion-focused Coping: Positive Reappraisal



Emotion-focused Coping: Positive Reappraisal



Coping

No coping strategy or technique is equally effective in all situations. The most effective coping is flexible, meaning that we fine-tune our coping strategies to meet the demands of a particular stressor ([page 513](#)). People are likely to adapt well to the stresses of life if they have the skills to use a variety of coping techniques and know how and when to apply them most effectively.

In general problem-focused coping provide better outcomes for situations you can control. For situations you cannot control, emotion-focused coping tends to have better outcomes.

For example, in a mock high jacking simulation, participants who tried to problem solve with the high jackers (problem-focused coping) had worse outcomes because they didn't have the resources or skills to be successful compared to those who engages in emotion-focused coping.

Other stress reducing and stress managing measures

- Engage in regular exercise
- Eat a balanced diet and get enough sleep
- Use caffeine in moderation

- Don't expect perfection from yourself or from others
- Recognize and accept your limits (tie to perfectionism)
- Make time for relaxation and activities you enjoy
- Strike a balance of work, school, family friends, hobbies, etc.
- Learn patience: Slow down. If you suffer from "hurry sickness," slow down
- Seek social support. Social support can moderate the effects of stress
- Write about your feelings, especially if you don't have someone you can talk about stressful events

- Don't respond to stress with behaviors that will increase stress in the long run, such as overeating, drinking or using drugs
- Organize your life (remember chapter 6: Memory). It can help reduce stress, and you can practice these skills to help improve memory)
- Be proactive

Why doesn't health promoting knowledge (cognitions) necessarily translate into healthy behavior?



Knowledge about the appropriate behavior doesn't necessarily translate into appropriate behavior for a variety of reasons.

- (1) We need a culture that encourages appropriate behavior (see Learning)
- (2) We need feedback on our performance
- (3) We need to recognize that we aren't going to be perfect in applying our knowledge to new circumstances.