

**NPTEL**

**NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE**

**Course Name**

**Stress Management**

**By**

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**Lecture 16: Developing Cognitive Coping Skills**

You hello everybody welcome to this final week on stress of stress management this week we are going to study this different strategies to relieve stress and in today's session we shall focus on the stress and coping so we will talk about what are the different types of coping.

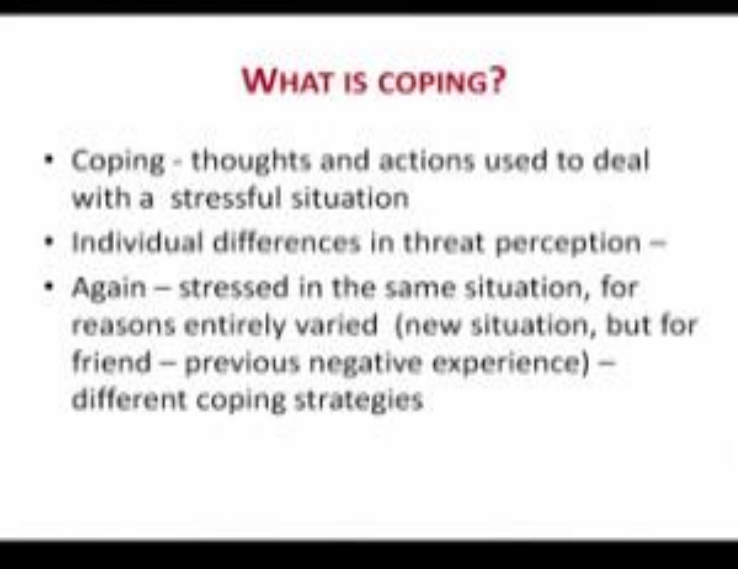
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## OUTLINE

- **STRESS AND COPING**
  - DIFFERENT TYPES OF COPING
  - DEVELOPING POSITIVE COPING STRATEGIES

And developing positive coping strategies so what is coping many of you use the word coping very often.

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**WHAT IS COPING?**

- Coping - thoughts and actions used to deal with a stressful situation
- Individual differences in threat perception –
- Again – stressed in the same situation, for reasons entirely varied (new situation, but for friend – previous negative experience) – different coping strategies

So we generally talk about I am coping with this situation I am dealing with that I am hoping I have to cope with an adverse situation for a long time so what exactly do we mean by coping so opening is basically the thoughts and actions used or employed by an individual to deal with a stressful situation and most often than not we have been doing this for days together without even realizing that we are using several strategies so we take it as a as an individual response to an individual situation.

But many times we often use these strategies effectively and that by itself helps us to train our brain to use these strategies in future also so that it helps us now today so we're coming back to coping again we so how does coping differ why are other wireless coping strategies differ from one person to the other so several times when we ask an individual to cope in a certain way that strategy that has been effective for you or for me may not be effective for another person the reason being individual differences the point again what do we mean by individual differences when we talk of differences between two individuals in the way.

They cope with the situation it is primarily because of how they see the situation or how they perceive a situation so again coming back to the same old story of stressor is a stressor because

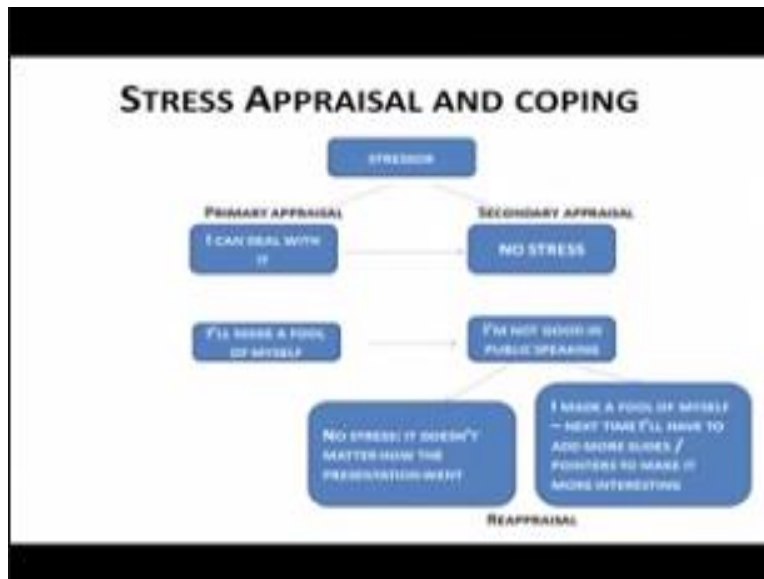
of the way it is see now we will move a little forward from that so people may be stressed in one situation and stressed differently in one situation three spoken about being stressed or not stressed in a situation that depends upon whether I am taking this as a stressor or I am not taking this as a stressor the next thing is we have talked about earlier about a stressor being a stressor because I perceive that I cannot cope with it and on the other hand a stressor is not a stressor.

When we think that we can cope with the situation we will talk about this a little more but now here we are discussing a different postulate a stressor can be seen as a stressor because of various reasons so the difference in coping strategies or the way one copes with a situation may be different because of the way the person is perceiving that stressor now what does it mean I am talking a little differently as from what we have said earlier it means that a stressor is a stressor to me for a particular reason a stressor the same stress and maybe a stressor to you for a different reason so say for example it is a stressor to me because I have never faced such a situation before.

It is a stressor to you because of your past experience in that situation so I will give you an example I have never exposed been exposed to public speaking so if public speaking for the first time is a stressor for me for you it may be different because you have had a negative experience in public speaking earlier so the situation is stressful to both of us but it is different because of the way we see the situation because of how it is not only how we perceive the stressor but it is also what our past experience is are associated with this stressor so to me the novelty of the situation is a stressor to you the past negative experience is a stressor.

So likewise as you can understand we need different coping strategies to deal with this so if I tell you that oh this has been very effective for me so why do not you try this it may be effective it may not be effective also the reason being because you your way of seeing the stressor is very idiosyncratic as compared to mine your way is different as compared to mine.

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That brings us to stress appraisal and coping now this model was given by Lazarus where he tells us how we actually appraise a situation and how do we cope with the situation so when he Lazarus says that there are two types of appraisal systems so one is a primary appraisal and the other is a second appraisal. So if say if there is a situation where the primary appraisal is I can deal with it then the secondary appraisal is of no stress but if the primary appraisal say is that i will make a fool of myself and the secondary appraisal I am not good in public speaking say I if I take a situation.

Where we are this is about a public speaking situation where an individual has to give a speech or a presentation now if the person feels that I will make a fool of myself a secondary appraisal is he is actually noticing what whiles peaking while during the behavior what are the flaws in his expressions in his behavior, so he may appraise that I am not good in public speaking if then the appraisal is that no it does not matter how the presentation went then that will not cause him any stress.

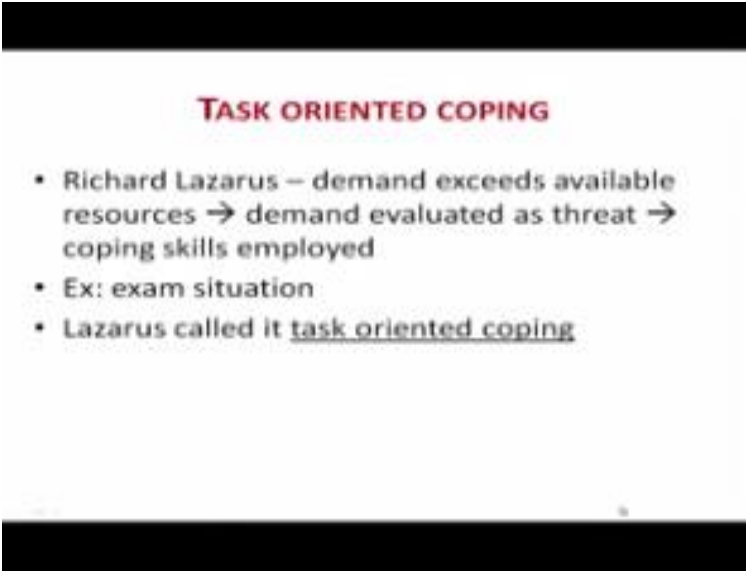
But if the if his appraisal is that I have made a fool of myself because of the primary appraisal and he reappraise that then the coping strategy can be the next time. I will have to add more

slides or pointers to make it more interesting or to develop it or rehearse it more. So what is happening is in this case the individual is actually after the reappraisal system he is employing positive coping strategies to deal with the situation. So he is trying to avoid the ordeal effectively, are adaptively through the situation then that he may cause he may not be effective in a public situation so he is making a commends the other hand if the individual takes it as that see this time also I have made a fool of myself and in future again.

I this just shows that I am no good at it so, I have made a fool of myself I will make a fool of myself from the primary appraisal even the secondary appraisal if it is that I have made a fool of myself and this just is more confirmed then henceforth the they will know the coping strategy may be one of avoidance and that being a maladaptive coping strategy so, what we are talking of over here is that first up from our previous experiences.

The primary appraisal is made and after that during a situation the secondary appraisal is made and how we do you praise actually helps us to decide whether it is a positive coping strategy or a negative coping strategy. And whenever we are talking of negative coping strategy the it means that it brings about maladaptive.

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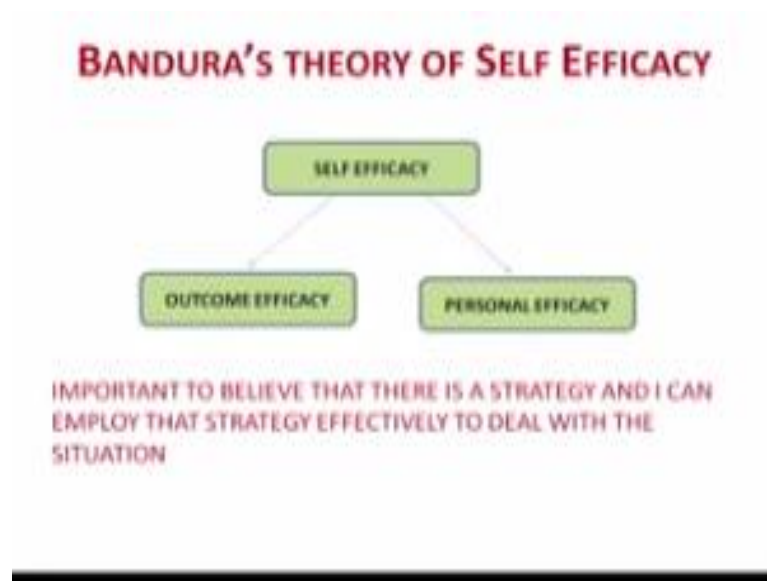
**TASK ORIENTED COPING**

- Richard Lazarus – demand exceeds available resources → demand evaluated as threat → coping skills employed
- Ex: exam situation
- Lazarus called it task oriented coping

Behavior patterns now this thing Lazarus is named it as task oriented coping so again this is a positive coping strategy where Lazarus says that when does a coping strategy when is a coping strategy required when the demands exceed available resources so then the stress there is a stress and the demand is evaluated as a threat so then we get stressed and once we get stressed and the demands are more we need to deal with it with effective coping skills.

So say in an exam situation when an individual is stressed he may think of because of the exam knocking at the door or maybe just before the exam situation. He may employ several strategies to deal with the stress so maybe take a deep breath forgoing to the examination hall keep telling yourself that work, I can deal with this situation better this anxiety is good for me for my performance because I know that little bit of stress is required to do well so these are different strategies that the individual is using to deal with the situation. So this Lazarus spoke of it as task-oriented coping, so now we get to the Bandura's theory of self-efficacy.

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This is another very important factor that is related to coping strategies now Bandura's spoke about self-efficacy as having two variables one is the outcome very efficient see and the personal

efficacy, so when do we actually use coping strategies bandura said that we use coping strategies when we feel that we will be able to use them aptly to deal with the situation so it is not that that I know that this is a coping strategy will make me use that strategy the reason being that I may not it not need not necessarily that I feel that I can use it properly unless.

I feel that they I have the personal efficacy to use it properly I will not use it so that these two are major variables of self-efficacy, so one first we assess when we assess a situation we see that whether there are strategies to deal with the situation. So we identify the coping strategies next is we see that whether we will be able to use that strategy effectively for example say if somebody wants to lose weight he or she knows that one way of losing weight is exercise.

So that is the outcome efficacy that exercise helps in losing weight now the personal efficacy could be I know exercise will help me to lose weight but I do not think I can do it I will not be able to employ exercise and use it to lose weight, so the what is happening is the individual is evaluating whether this coping strategy is good for him to be employed at this current situation.

So bandura says that it is important to believe that there is a strategy and I can employ that strategy effectively to deal with the situation so unless so only the coping strategy being available is not good enough we should also evaluate whether we will be able to use it effectively so there come several techniques of using self-control employing self control techniques self-discipline in techniques to excuse me to deal with a situation effectively.

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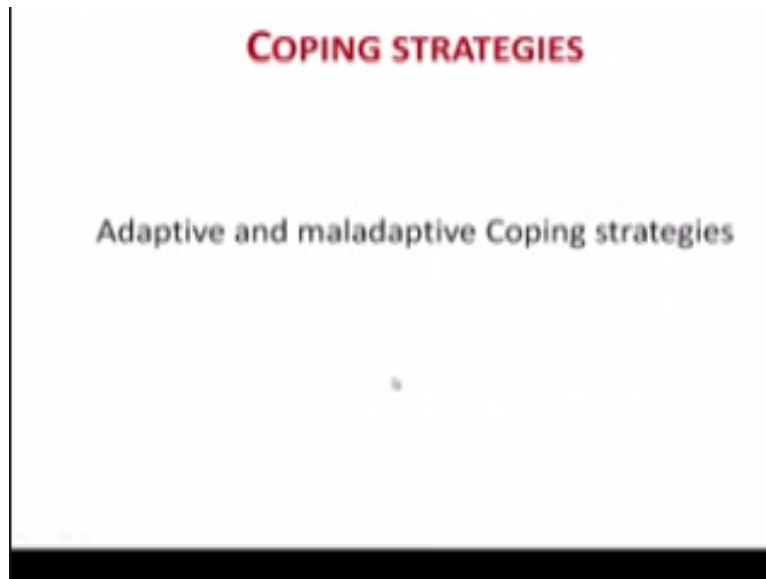
## TASK ORIENTED COPING

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So now.



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We were talking about coping strategies of being different types so one could be an adaptive coping strategy and the other could be maladaptive coping strategies so one of the examples of we discuss about the adaptive coping strategies little later but one of the maladaptive coping strategies would be you know something that would lead to behaviors that are not effective for the individual in the future ,so something like avoidance something like denial of a situation is a maladaptive coping strategy.

So I am the coping strategies from mind you are used to reduce stress so maladaptive coping strategies are also used to reduce stress both adaptive and maladaptive strategies are used to reduce stress. The differences the maladaptive coping strategies actually reduced stress for a temporary period for some time but it may bring about other problems or other hazards or other stresses related to the situation and it may be only effective for a short span of time.

For example we come across several individuals alcoholics who tell you that oh I am trying to I have plunged into alcohol because to forget some sort of now that is a very common thing that is often, said no alcohol this strategy may help you to forget things for a time being short span of

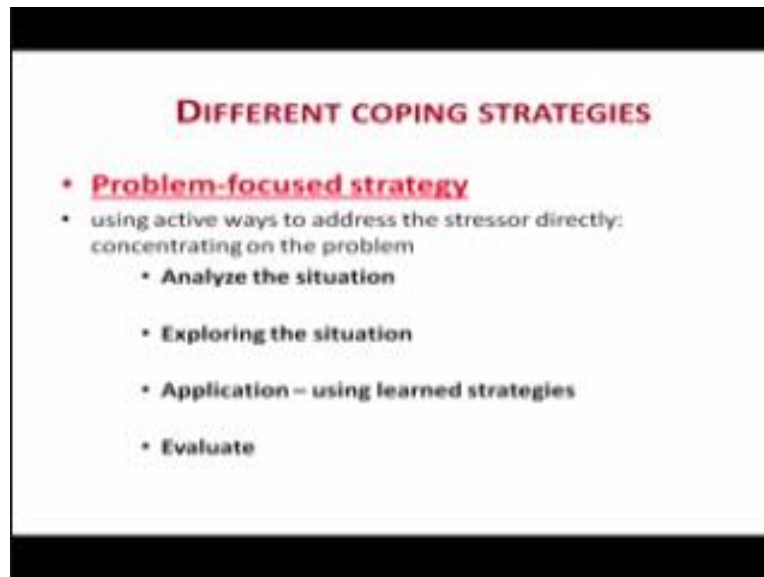
time but actually alcohol being a depressant, increases the probability of the individual having a low mood for a longer time so though for a transient period alcohol.

May help an individual to forget something may affect the working memory may affect the inhibition may affect the focus but in long-term it is actually going to lower the mood and it will also bring about other cognitive impairments that may lead to several other problems relating to the stressor so adopting the means of alcohol to forget something or deal with sadness deal with a stressor is not an adaptive coping strategy.

Now self-blame is another maladaptive coping strategy very often we use self-blame to you know to reduce stress who I am and it is more like internalizing the stressor so it only helps I am really responsible for this and I feel sorry and I do not know what to do and I do not want to do anything so what is happening in self-blame is the individual is actually losing out on opportunities to effectively deal with the situation. So rather if rather and exploring the opportunities he or she is trying to cocoon himself into an arrow cell now this is a negative maladaptive coping strategy.

It may help to deal with the situation currently but is not a good strategy to deal with problems in the long run venting is another venting or outburst of emotion is another coping strategy which is several times maladaptive coping strategy, on the other hand venting if it is within limits with moderation it can be a healthy strategy then it would be more like expression of your emotions which we which is an adaptive coping strategy avoidance behavior is also a coping negative maladaptive coping strategy most of the time especially if an individual is having anxiety is related to a social situation. But it may be a positive coping strategy in a few occasional situations as well.

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So that brings us to the different types of coping strategies and we will talk about the problem focused strategy and the emotion focused strategy, so when we are talking about problem focused strategy it is basically using active ways to address the stressor directly, so we have spoken about a problem-solving strategies earlier during our discussion on assertiveness so we see that in our problem-focused coping strategy what is done primarily is focusing on the problem or concentrating on the problem then analyzing the situation.

So explore analyzing what are the problems that are leading to the stressor and how so after that exploring the situation when I am talking of exploring we are actually identifying what are the different ways of coping now after that there comes. The efficacy assessment or whether I am personally efficacious to with this situation, and what are the coping strategies that I can apply now application of these the next step is application of these learn strategies and finally which is most important I told you earlier also during our discussion on certain is to evaluate how did this help so if this strategy helped.

Then in future also I am going to use this strategy to help me because then I will again use this strategy in similar situations are in similar stressful situations and because I have this feedback

already that this has worked it will help me to feel a more help me to feel more confident or more positive about dealing with the stresses. And we already know that once we think that i can deal with the stressor the intensity of the stressor reduces much more because we know that we have control over this situation so that brings us to emotion focused strategy.

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### Emotion-focused strategy

Emotion-focused coping strategies – emphasis on the distress, rather than the actual problem situation

**Focusing on emotions:**

- Magical thinking
- Brooding
- Blaming
- Avoidance

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And emotion-focused coping strategies emphasize on the distress rather than the actual problem situation so do you think a problem focused strategy would be a good one or an emotion focus strategy many times emotion-focused strategies may be severely impaired or maybe pro causing problems in communication. So imagine that in what happens during an emotion focused strategy coping strategy is we focus more on the distress of the situation rather than the actual problem so this is imagined when there is a conflict so in an interpersonal conflict beseech.

And relieved that the communication is focused more as the communication continues the focus is more on the emotions that are being expressed or rather on the differs, we realize the situation and focuses more on past experiences and the emotions are remembered more so several times we focus on the some of the emotions that are expressed our this magical thinking, this brooding there is a blaming tendency and also avoidance behavior. So these strategies are amazing

basically used in emotion-focused coping the magical thinking is not an emotion but magical thinking about magical thinking may several times lead.

To a maladaptive coping behaviors magical thinking would be something like if I do this then this is going to cause me more problems not based on a rational decision so I he smiled at me and say if I do not pray ten times before I go to the examination then my examination is not going to go where so now this is if this is a coping strategy I am anxious about my exams and if this is a coping strategy that I adopt to deal with the way to deal with the anxiety examination anxiety then definitely I am using logical thinking ,because in no way my doing a ritualistic behavior for 10 times will affect my performance.

In the examination further more you will often come across students who will say that after the exam is over okay if I do this behavior then my results will be good but the exam is already over so don't you think that's magical thinking so it in no way will that your ritualistically of your other behaviors will actually help your academic performance. Once it is already done so in how what is it how can you rationally link it so what is it other than magical thinking, we have spoken about blaming and avoidance and brooding you already know that is also a way of expressing our emotions.

And dealing with a situation, so a complaining brooding behavior as a coping strategy is very frequently used by many of us are grumbling, brooding, over a loss or brooding over a stressful situation it does not this what we are doing in such a situation is actually focusing on the emotion but we are not dealing with the problem so as you can well understand the problem focus coping strategy is any day much better than the use of an emotion focused strategy.

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**Positive coping strategies....**

- **Optimistic outlook!**  
each obstacle is a learning experience
- **Adjust expectations**
- **Take baby steps – one at a time**
- **Take an eagle's view**  
different perspective
- **Communicate – express yourself**
- **Seek support from others**
- **Accept yourself / others**  
No one is perfect

Now some of the coping strategies I try to enlist some of the strategies that you could use every day so we have been talking about a lot about the theoretical parts of problems focused and coping and emotion focus and maladaptive and negative and adaptive strategies but what will you exactly do so if anybody asks me the question but what would I do to deal with such things so what exactly is a positive coping strategy, so I try to sketch out a few points and I feel you can use this apply this in your daily life.

So first and foremost it is very important to have an optimistic outlook so the elicitation of hope so whenever if you think that this is not any impossibility this is something that I can deal with then believe me you can deal with it your brain will try and explore and try to find out different strategies to deal with the situation if you start off with oh this is not this is not good I cannot deal with it then you will not be able to deal with it that is obvious. So let's start with an optimistic outlook so each obstacle is a learning experience.

So now adjusting expectations many times our expectations from ourselves are much higher so there is a very common understanding that it is always very often. I hear from students they say that okay parents and the others have a lot of expectations from me but have you just sat down

and thought that do you have extra expectations higher expectations from yourself it is not bad to have higher expectations but what happens is frequently we need to adjust our expectations from ourselves in life. So many times maybe the situation is adverse so you if your expectations are here and your reality is this then there are no balance so obviously, there will be a dissonance and there will be stress because the demands from the situation are much higher.

Than you can actually supply, so we spoken even then we if we try and use our coping strategies many times we get very exhausted so it is very important to adjust expectations so say suppose you are always a topper in your class or always you excel in something it may be that not always will you excel it may be that you were not well during this performance in the last performance, and you did not you will have to adjust that okay, could not it does not matter I was not being able to give my full potential or maybe that there are okay, there are others. In the class who are as good or maybe better so it is okay, to adjust your expectations from yourself to this is a positive coping strategy to deal with stress now taking daily steps.

So or rather taking one step at a time so most of the time we try and see a problem as a whole and when we see a problem as a whole the problem again is that we do not it becomes too stressful because we don't make peace means of it many times you will see that if you break it into smaller parts and you address each part one step at a time you deal with the stressor more effectively ,so when I in the previous session I was talking about goal setting and breaking.

It into primary goals intermediary goals and long-term goals short-term goals intermediary goals and long-term goals similarly. So when you are addressing a stressor you may not look at it like if you if you plan to climb the highest mountain in the world so if we look if we start stay down and look at the Everest it is like oh my god it is a huge task and it is impossible if you start taking baby steps towards it okay, I am going to do this much and let me then see how I can deal with the situation I will go up to base camp from base camp.

I will go up to camp one and from camp one to camp too so maybe but you know once you take it as baby steps you will feel that your personal efficacy is much higher. So naturally you will be able to deal with the situation much better take an eagle's view or I should say a helicopter view

or a larger perspective so how does an eagle see the world he sees it from up and you can actually have a larger view than many of us so we human beings are seen at a parallel level so we are seeing it just from one angle so take a larger perspective.

Of the problem and in this case also a different perspective say this is one thing that I often tell students that the way you are looking at a problem will be different from if you look at it from a different angle so we say think about your eyes as a camera you are looking at a problem if you change that angle it will definitely give you a different look so why not put yourself on somebody else's shoes and see the problem from a different angle. So it could be that if one of the things say for example and if you were thinking that this examination is oh god I will not be able to deal with it or this interview is too stressful it's it maybe because you are thinking of this interview as the major thing in your life.

So think about if you look from an eagle's eye so you're looking down at yourself as one dot and with one interview which is a much smaller dot and how much is that actually affecting your life so there will be several other important interviews may be there will be several other things to do in life so you need not see this as a stressful experience so it may be an enriching experience for you so the if the moment you start seeing it like that your perspective changes and the intensity of the stress reduces to communicate and express yourself it really helps when you interact with others when you talk to others about your problems or your stresses.

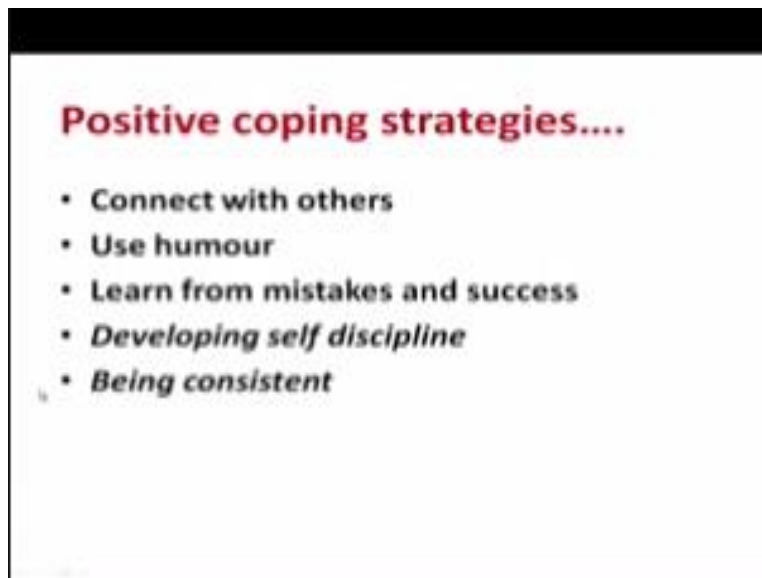
So it also helps when you seek support from others remember that social support is a very important factor in dealing with stress several times it as some researchers have also shown that friendship reduces stress so you can actually go through this and you will see that if you rather than. I again emphasize rather than virtual interactions face-to-face interactions actually help the brain to think to perceive the situation much more globally one of the reasons being that you will also come across people who have gone through similar problems who have dealt with such problems earlier so accepting yourself as well as others.

So it need not be that this is a black or white one or zero you know situation it is not a binomial problem so no one is perfect if this time it did not go well or if it is not that this time it has to go



like this so it is not if you are no tone then it does not mean that you are zero it is binomial problem so is spoken about connecting with others.

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So through importantly, it is very important to form interactions using humor here is another very important positive strategy and positive coping strategy many times you just see if you deep with a stressor with a humorous angle if you look at something with humor it reduces stress and learn from mistakes and success that brings us to the last point of problem solving strategy where we spoke about evaluation.

So it is not always that you learn from your mistakes it all it is also that you learn from success so from mistakes we learn what to do what not to do but from success we learn that what to do again in a similar situation and then we can actually fine tune it a little more as to how to do it and how much to do it so developing self-discipline this is very important to be more confident to develop or assertiveness skills and also to deal with stress, so being consistent now it doesn't mean that you have just dealt with the situation once and that is great. I have dealt with it okay next time you go back to your old strategy so once you actually evaluate it is like a process you grow and enrich yourself so you have used one positive coping strategy.

You say one you do not prefer interacting you stay by yourself you've just gone out of your room today and you have interacted with two people so tomorrow you take the positive out of it what have I learn from this what how it has it enriched me tomorrow this is going to UM you are going to try to fine tune it a little more so once you are consistent with your strategies it will help you to evolve see. I have I want to reduce weight.

I have gone for exercise today. I want to be fit I have gone to exercise today and after two days of exercise oh I have had enough that's not going to help so be consistent being consistent with time management being consistent with self-discipline being consistent with interpersonal interactions these actually help you to effectively deal with stress because what it does is overall or globally it helps you to evolve it helps you to develop so finally in our session today we have discussed about the what is coping what are the different coping strategies and how to effectively use them thank you.