

Hello, class. So in today's lesson, we're going to be expanding on the idea of stress and talking specifically about how a person can cope with stress as well. So stress is a body's reaction to changes within a person's environment.

So introducing a stressor into a person's environment, which is to say something that causes stress and disrupts a person's environment in some way causes a person to react in certain kinds of ways. Now this is a normal reaction to changes within the environment. This isn't something abnormal in any way. As a way of protecting people from potentially harmful situations in the short term.

So a lot of times we would call stress in this kind of situation eustress, which is to say a good kind of stress. Which helps to enhance a person's bodily functioning during a certain period of time. And this is both mental and physical. So for example, if a person is physically in danger then stress can be very helpful because it causes them to get excited to get out of that situation.

Similarly if a person is taking a test then this heightened state of mental awareness and mental ability can help them to perform better in some situations. However, in the long term, it can lead to a lot of mental and physical problems, things like fatigue in a person, irritability. It can lead to decreased mental functioning over a long period of time. Because the person is just tired. And also physical impairments. It can lead to heart disease because of increased blood pressure over time. It can lead to ulcers and decreased immunological functioning in a person. That makes them more likely to get sick because they're being stressed out.

Now this is particularly true today with an increased number of stressors all around us. Research has shown that people that live in cities have much higher stress and anxiety levels than people that do not. They're more likely to develop mood or psychotic disorders. They have a higher activation of the area of the brain called the amygdala, which is the area that's related to emotions.

So you see it's particularly important because of all of these new factors within our environments that we deal with stress in the proper sorts of ways. And this is what we talk about when we say coping with stress.

So there are two major approaches to coping with stress. And we'll take a look at both of these in some detail. So the first one is problem-focused coping, which is when a person attempts to control the thing that caused the stress itself. The thing within the environment, or the stressor, that's causing the person to feel all these feelings of anxiety or stress or fear. So this can be done in several different ways either by removing the thing that's causing you the stress.

For example, if you hear a buzzing alarm that's going off, you go and you turn it off. So you get rid of the stressor within your environment. Or removing yourself from a stressful situation. For example, if you can't turn off a fire alarm, you simply walk away so you don't have to hear the alarm and you're not stressed out. Or by taking some other kind of action that makes the situation more manageable. For example, putting in ear plugs. So that way you don't have to hear the thing that's causing you stress. So that's problem-focused coping.

The second type is emotion-focused coping. And this is attempting to control a person's own mental or emotional reaction to the stressor itself. So this is particularly useful in a situation they can't be escaped, where the stressor is constantly around you and there's no way to deal with it in a problem-focused kind of way. So there are lots of different ways we can do this.

For example, we can learn certain stress management techniques, which are cognitive and behavioral strategies that people can learn to reduce stress and its harmful effects. An example of stress management strategy would be something like thinking about calm or relaxing things. Or going to your happy place, which is a technique called guided imagery.

Another way that you can deal with or you can use an emotion-focused approach to coping is by understanding how your body is reacting to these sorts of things, which can help you to control its reactions and reduce the amount of stress that you have. At its most basic level, this means being aware of when you're getting stressed out. Noticing say you've got an increased heart rate and taking a deep breath. So in other words, you control your breathing, which helps to reduce the bodily reaction to stress that you have. And as a result, helps to reduce your stress.

So what we mean by this is by understanding the information that's coming in about your body itself. And this is what we call biofeedback. This is when a person gets information about their bodies activities and they can learn to control those reactions to prevent different kinds of problems or illnesses from developing. For example, this has been used to control the blood flow of a person to their heads, which can help to reduce the instances of migraines occurring in people.

So this is something that has been proven to actually be effective. At its most sensitive level even, biofeedback has been used by let's say Buddhist monks to actually control their body's temperature. This means that they have such an awareness of their body and what's happening that they're able to actually control the high or the low temperature that they might have.

Now finally, one of the most important sorts of correlations to stress is the social support that a person has around them, which is to say the more friends and family around a person means a person is better able to deal with stressful events around them. Now they can talk to those people as a result of this. They can commiserate with

things that are stressing them out.

But social support also provides a person with a better feeling about themselves. Because more people around them means more people that are likely to tell the positive things about themselves and to make them feel better. So social support has been helpful in the treatment of almost every mental disorder. And it's definitely something to consider whenever we talk about dealing with things like stress or really any kind of psychological problem.