

SPECIAL PAPER

Theoretical Approaches to Coping

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Abstract

Introduction: Dealing with stress requires conscious effort, it cannot be perceived as equal to individual's spontaneous reactions. The intentional management of stress must not be confused with defense mechanisms. Coping differs from adjustment in that the latter is more general, has a broader meaning and includes diverse ways of facing a difficulty.

Aim: An exploration of the definition of the term "coping", the function of the coping process as well as its differentiation from other similar meanings through a literature review.

Methodology: Three theoretical approaches of coping are introduced; the psychoanalytic approach; approaching by characteristics; and the Lazarus and Folkman interactive model.

Results: The strategic methods of the coping approaches are described and the article ends with a review of the approaches including the functioning of the stress-coping process, the classification-types of coping strategies in stress-inducing situations and with a criticism of coping approaches.

Conclusions: The comparison of coping in different situations is difficult, if not impossible. The coping process is a slow process, so an individual may select one method of coping under one set of circumstances and a different strategy at some other time. Such selection of strategies takes place as the situation changes.

Key- words: coping, stress, strategies, approaches, health, illness.