

Why Doesn't Everyone React to Stress in the Same Way?

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A full-page background image showing a sunset over a body of water. The sky is filled with clouds, some of which are illuminated from below by the setting sun, creating a mix of orange, pink, and blue hues. The sun itself is a bright, glowing orb partially obscured by clouds. The horizon line is visible, separating the dark blue water from the sky. On the right side, a dark, silhouetted rocky coastline or island rises from the water.

*Are some people prone to stress
while others are not?*

*How does personality influence our
interpretations of our life events?*

•

Genetics & Development

Genetics

- Genes control the stress response
 - Individuals have different responses to stress
- There is a genetic component to:
 - fearful behavior
 - anxiety disorders
 - Neurobiological response

Development

- Life experiences can affect a person's stress response
- Social support
 - Strong support is protective
- Early life stress
 - Increases stress reactivity as an adult

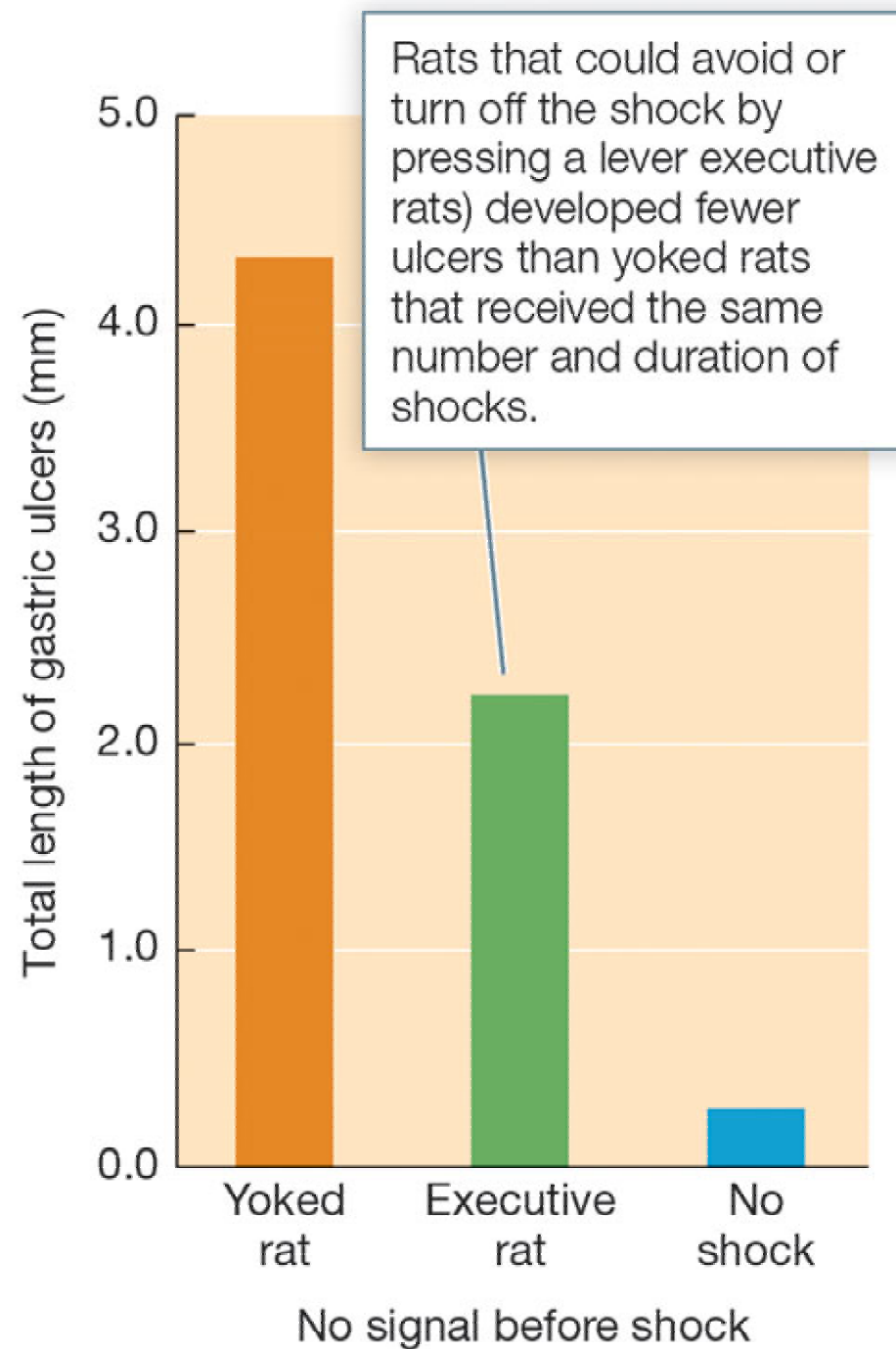
Perception of Stressors

Cognitive Appraisal:

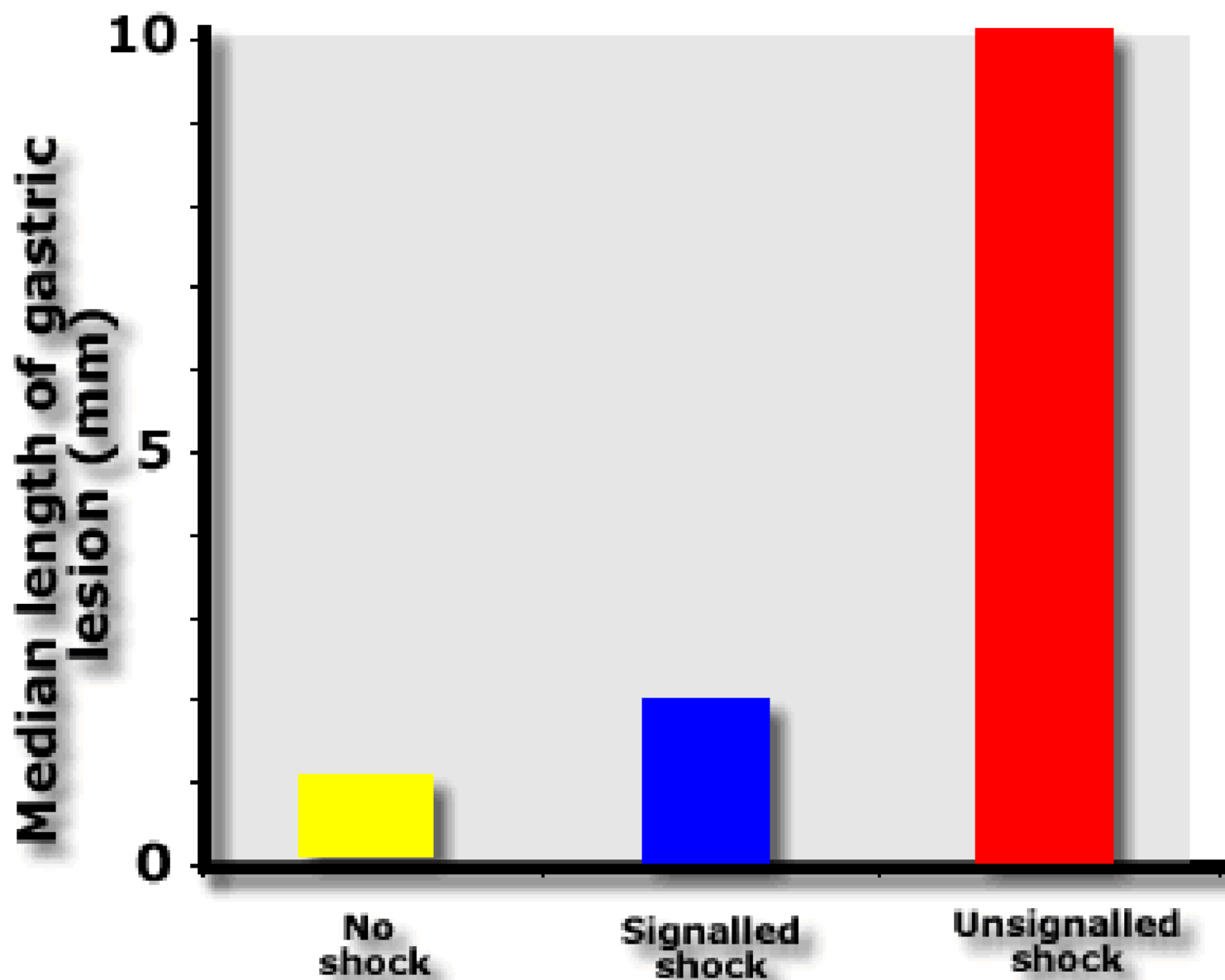
Physical and psychological responses to stress depends on how we think about them

Predictability and Control

- Two important features that influence the magnitude of the stress response
- Perception of control: if one believes that they cannot exert control over the stressors have increased impact
- Predictability: knowing when an expected stressor will occur

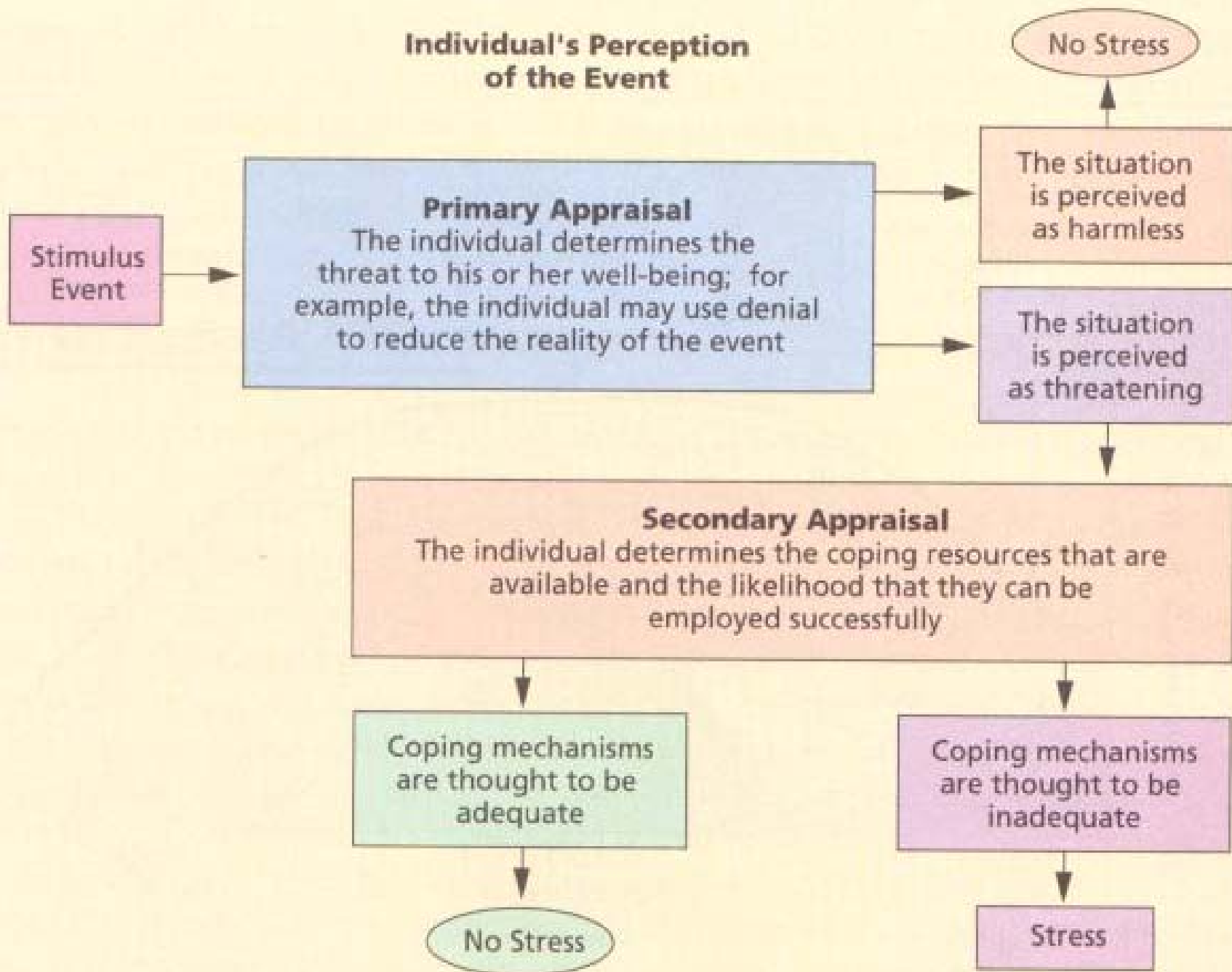


Predictability reduces stress



Transactional Model of Stress

- Propose that the interpretation of stressful events is more important than the events themselves
- It is neither the environment nor the person's response that defines stress
- It is the individual's perception of the psychological situation that defines stress
- Stress is a function of the person's feeling of threat, vulnerability, and ability to cope rather than the function of the stressor



Primary Appraisal

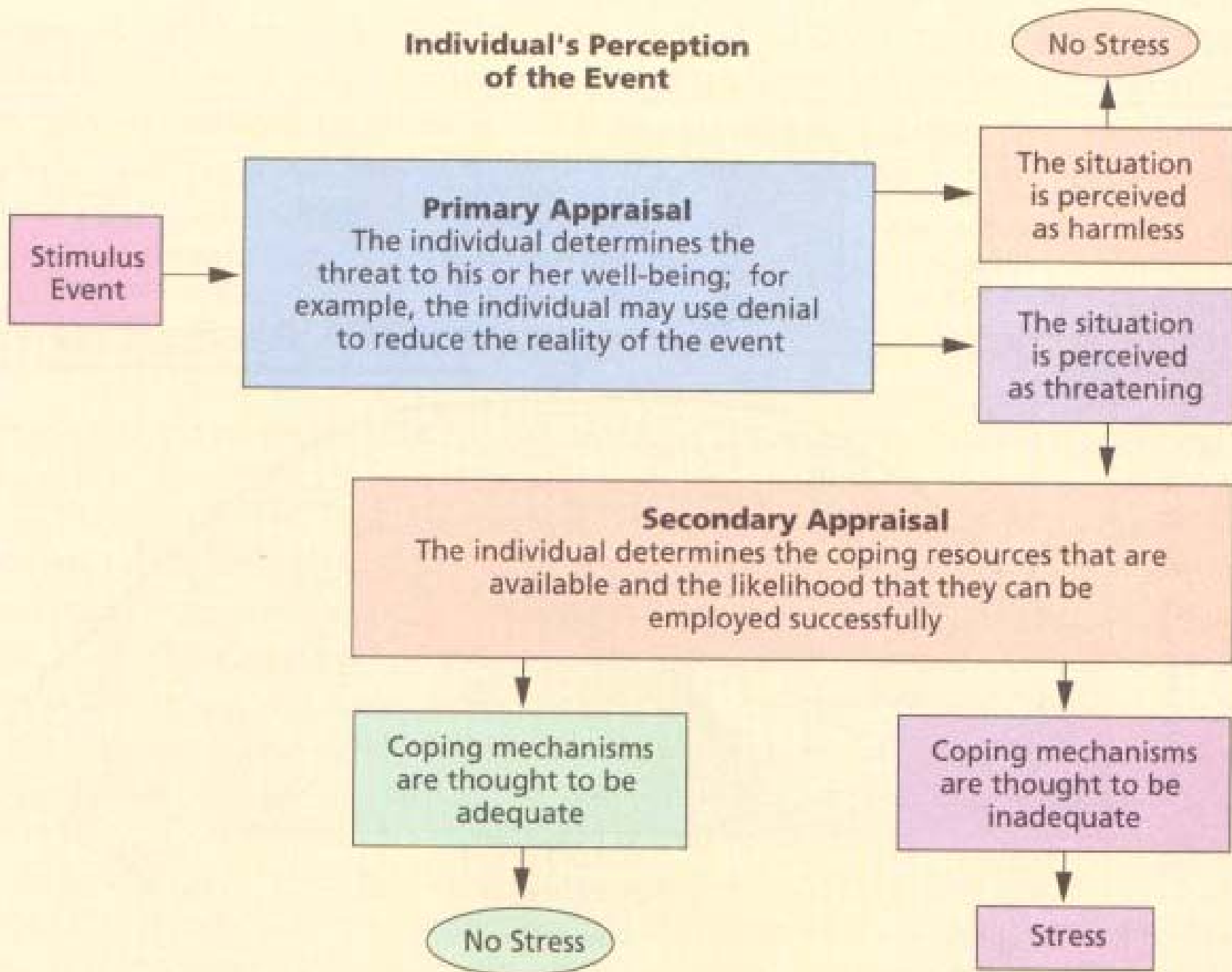
- Initial evaluation of a situation
- Three possible outcomes
 - Irrelevant
 - The event has no implication for the individual's well-being
 - Benign-positive
 - The event may increase well-being
 - Stressful
 - The situation is perceived as harmful, threatening, or challenging

Secondary Appraisal

- Concerned with a person's evaluation of his/her ability to cope with the situation
- Three questions:
 - What coping options are available?
 - Likelihood that one can apply the strategy?
 - Likelihood that any given options will work: will it reduce stress?

Reappraisal

- Continuous reappraisal on the basis of new information
- Identical to the initial process
- May lead to more stress OR less stress





Coping Strategies



Problem-Focused Coping: a response aimed at reducing, modifying, or eliminating a source of stress (e.g., if grades in a course are low, reduce work hours, change study strategy, etc.).

Emotion-Focused Coping: a response aimed at reducing the emotional impact of the stressor (e.g., denial, religious faith, wishful thinking, humor, alcohol/drugs, promiscuous sex).

You can **reappraise** the stressor and reduce the importance you attach to it.

Two major emotion-focused strategies are:

MEDITATION and BIOFEEDBACK

Coping & Resilience

Coping

- Ability to control emotions
- Ability to perceive reality
- Ability to think rationally
- Ability to problem solve
- Culturally defined

Resilience

- The ability to bounce back
- The positive capacity to cope with stress
- Provides resistance to negative events
 - Hardiness,
 - Resourcefulness

Coping

Adaptive Coping

- Contribute to resolution of the stress response

Maladaptive Coping

- Strategies that cause further problems

Active Coping

- Actively seeking resolution to the stress

Promote Adaptive Coping

- Realistic expectations
 - Set realistic goals
- Planning
 - Anticipate problems, have a backup plan
- Reframing
 - Change the way you look at things
- Relaxation
 - Learn relaxation techniques, take time-out for leisure
- Discuss the problem
 - Utilize existing social supports to problem solve

Promote Adaptive Coping

- **Training**
 - Prepares for stressful events
- **Nutrition**
 - Eat healthy, avoid skipping meals
- **Exercise**
 - Include regular exercise
- **Sleep**
 - Get adequate sleep—avoid fatigue



Avoid Maladaptive Coping

- Blurring of boundaries
- Avoidance/withdrawal
- Negative attitude
- Anger outbursts
- Alcohol/Drugs
- Hopelessness
- Negative self-talk
- Resentment
- Violence

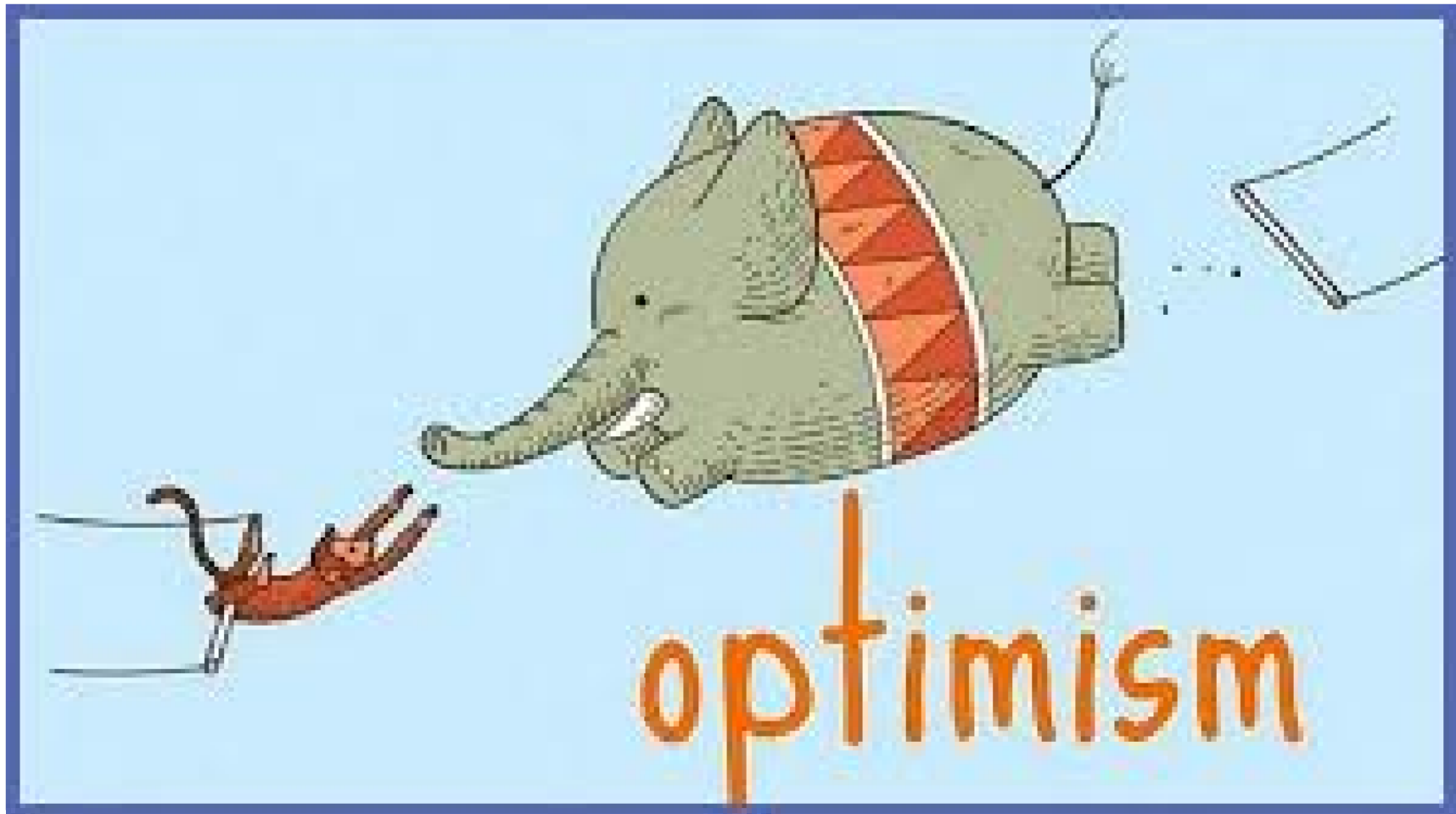
Promote Resilience Factors

- Positive Role Models
- Optimism
- Humor
- Moral Compass
- Altruism
- Religion & Spirituality
- Social Support

Optimism

- Positive Beliefs
 - Associated with well being
 - Cognitive reframing
 - Positive thinking
 - Refute the negative thinking
 - Believe in a meaningful cause
- It is important to acknowledge relevant negative factors
 - Unrealistic expectations

Let's Take a Quiz

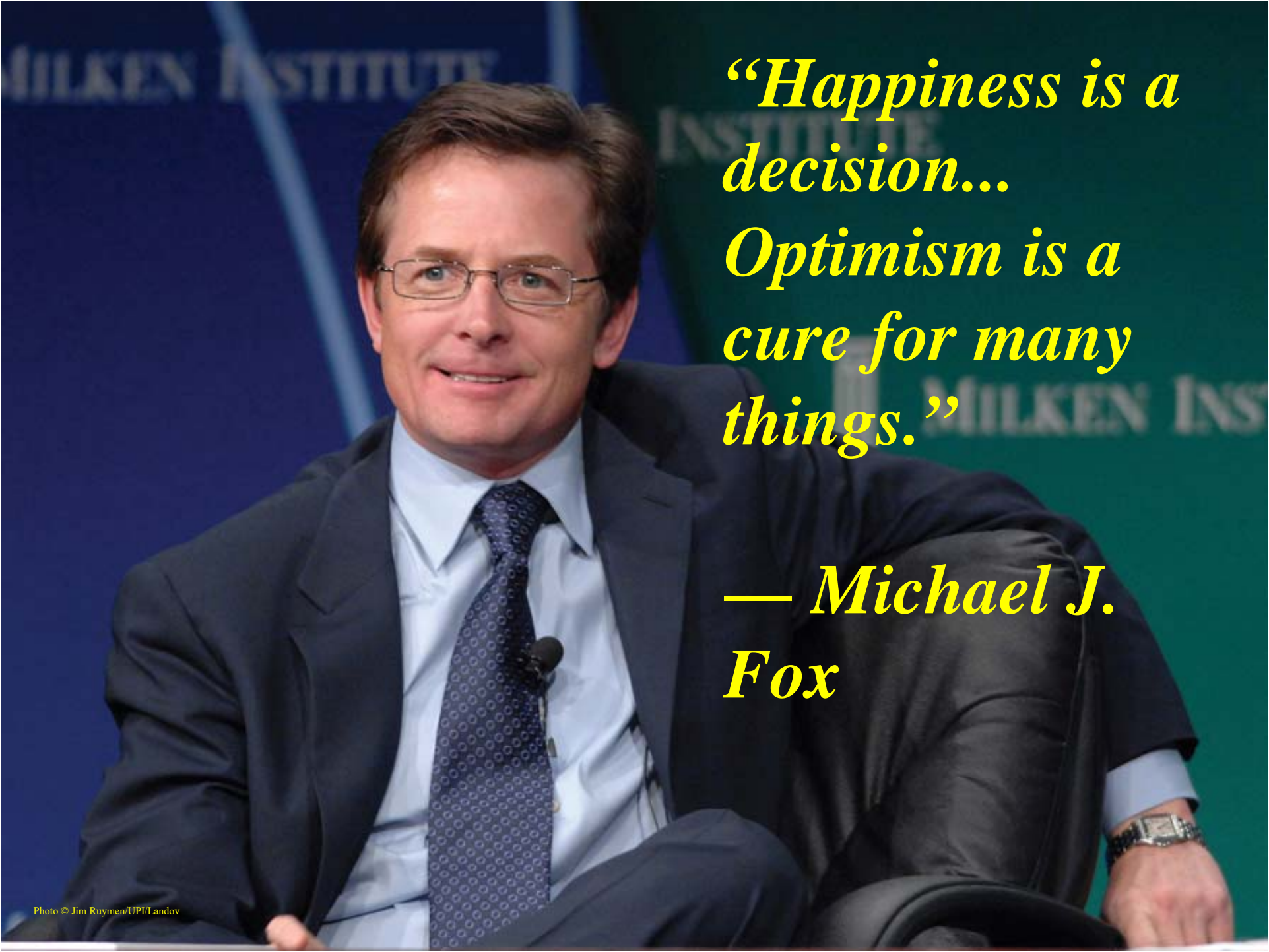


Calculate Your Score

- Ignore questions 2, 5, 6, and 8 – they are fillers!
- For questions 1, 4, and 10
 - A gets 4 points, B gets 3 points, C gets 2 points, D gets 1 point, E gets 0 points
- For questions 3, 7, and 9
 - A gets 0 points, B gets 1 point, C gets 2 points, D gets 3 points, E gets 4 points
- Add the scores together

Calculate Your Score

- The sum is your optimism score
- It ranges from 0-24
- 0 is extreme pessimism
- 24 extreme optimism
- On average, most people score 15
(slightly optimistic)

A photograph of Michael J. Fox, a man with brown hair and glasses, wearing a dark suit, light blue shirt, and patterned tie. He is seated and smiling slightly. The background is a blue and green backdrop with the text "MILKEN INSTITUTE" repeated. Overlaid on the right side of the image is a quote in yellow, italicized text.

*“Happiness is a
decision...
Optimism is a
cure for many
things.”*

*— Michael J.
Fox*

A lonely man is a strong man



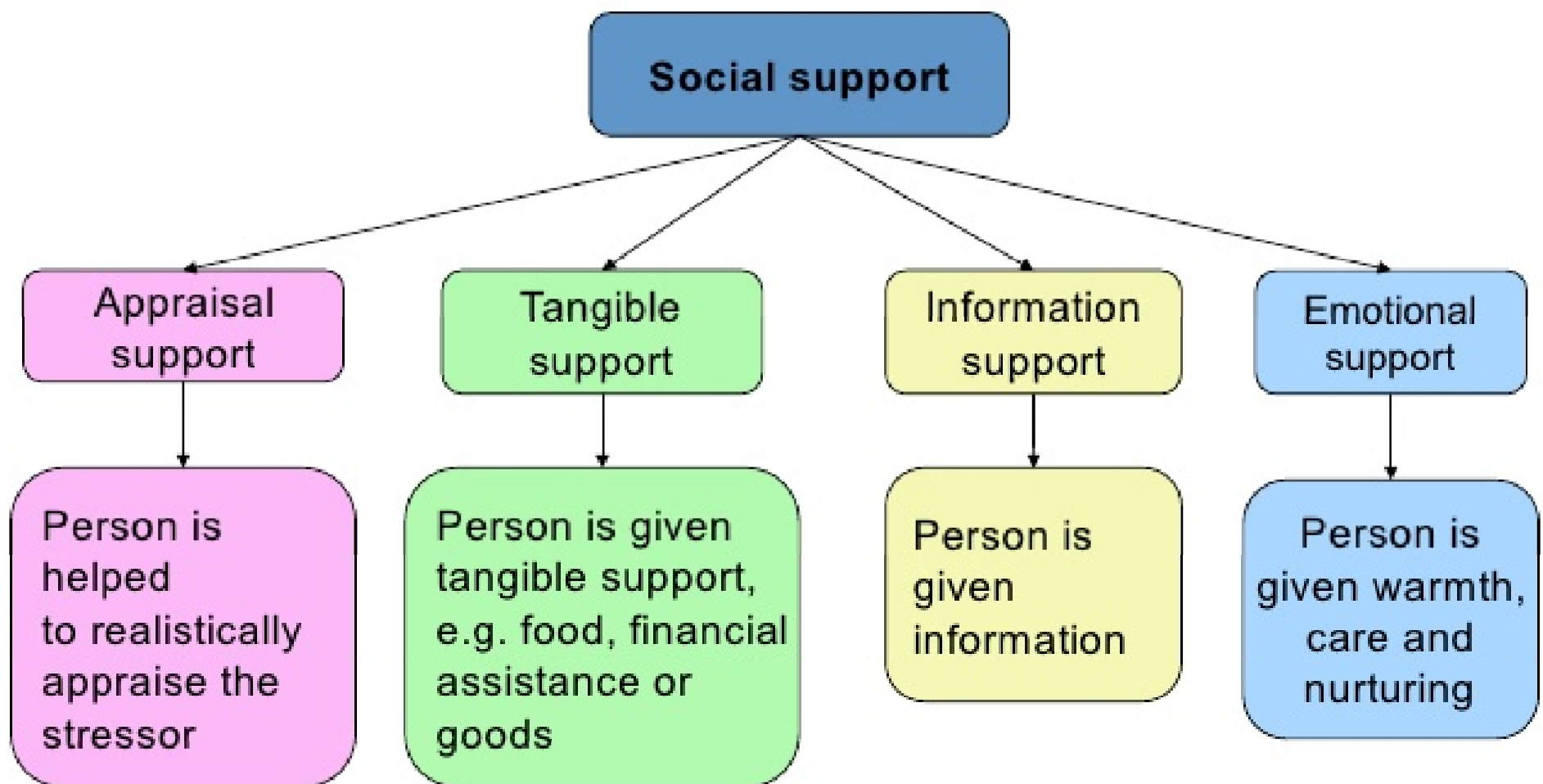
A lonely man is a strong man



Social Support: Environmental Resource for Coping

- What is Social Support?
 - social interactions or relationships that provide individuals with actual assistance
 - Settings that provide love, caring, or a sense of attachment to a valued social group or dyad

Social support is help or assistance from other people when needed.

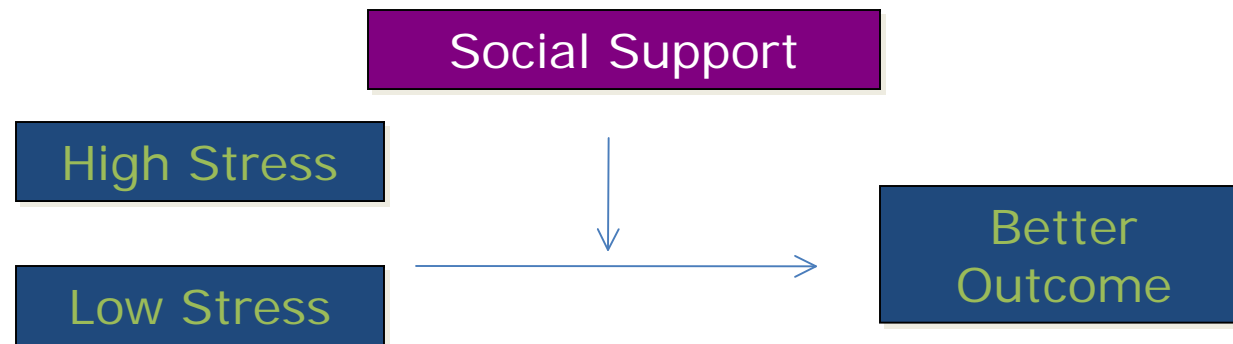


Social Support Hypotheses

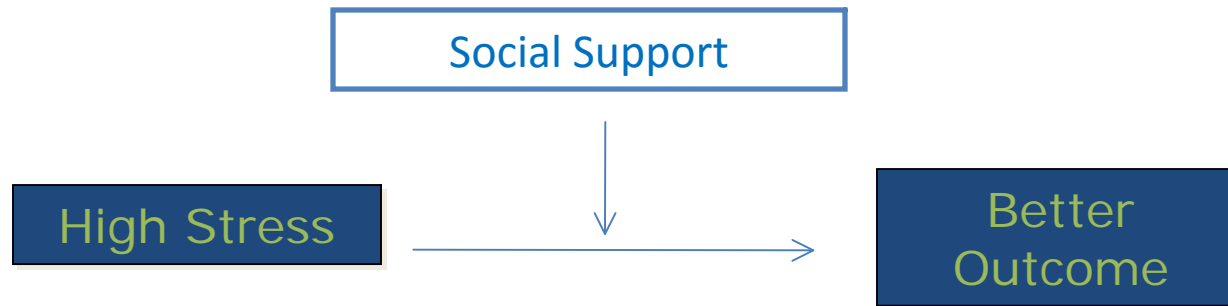
1. Direct Effect
2. Stress-buffering

Direct Effect Hypothesis

- Social Support has equivalent positive impact on well-being under both high & low stress conditions
- Social support is always good



Stress-Buffering Hypothesis



Downside of Social Support

- All relationships have costs & benefits
- Examples:
 - relatives with chronic illness
 - Social Support from high risk group

Personality Defined

- A collection of thoughts, attitudes, values, beliefs, perceptions, behaviors, and emotions that define who we are, how we view the world around us, and how others perceive us

Emotional Development and Personality

- Personality development theories
 - Watson (behaviorism)
 - Freud (psychoanalytical theory)
 - Erikson (developmental stages and tasks)
 - Piaget (cognitive development)
 - Kohlberg (moral development)
 - Maslow (hierarchy of needs)

Stress and Personality

- Stress-Prone Personality Types
 - Type A Personality
 - Type C Personality
 - Type D Personality
- (Ellis's) Irrational, Illogical Personality
 - Negative Self-Talk
- Millon's Model

The Type A Personality

- Pioneered by cardiologists Friedman and Rosenman (1974)
 - Noticed their cardiology patients always tried to achieve more in less time
 - Hypothesized this was stressful and harmful to one's heart

Characteristics of Type A Personality

- Competitive
- Verbally aggressive
- Hard-driving
- Unable to relax
- Very time conscious
- Easily angered
- Hostile

Type A Personality Body Language and Speech Patterns

- Tightening of facial muscles
- Gesturing with a clenched fist
- Grimacing
- Using explosive speech
- Interrupting the interviewer
- Hurrying the pace

Type A Personality Health Risks

- Greater rate of cardiovascular disease
- Greater rate of heart attacks
- Increased risk for premature death from all causes
- Not gender-specific

Millon's Model

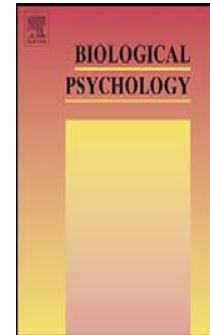
- Millon identified 8 personality styles that are particularly prone to stress
 - Aggressive
 - Narcissistic
 - Histrionic
 - Dependent
 - Passive-Aggressive
 - Compulsive
 - Avoidant
 - Schizoid



Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Biological Psychology

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/biopsycho



Neurohormonal and inflammatory hyper-responsiveness to acute mental stress in depression[☆]

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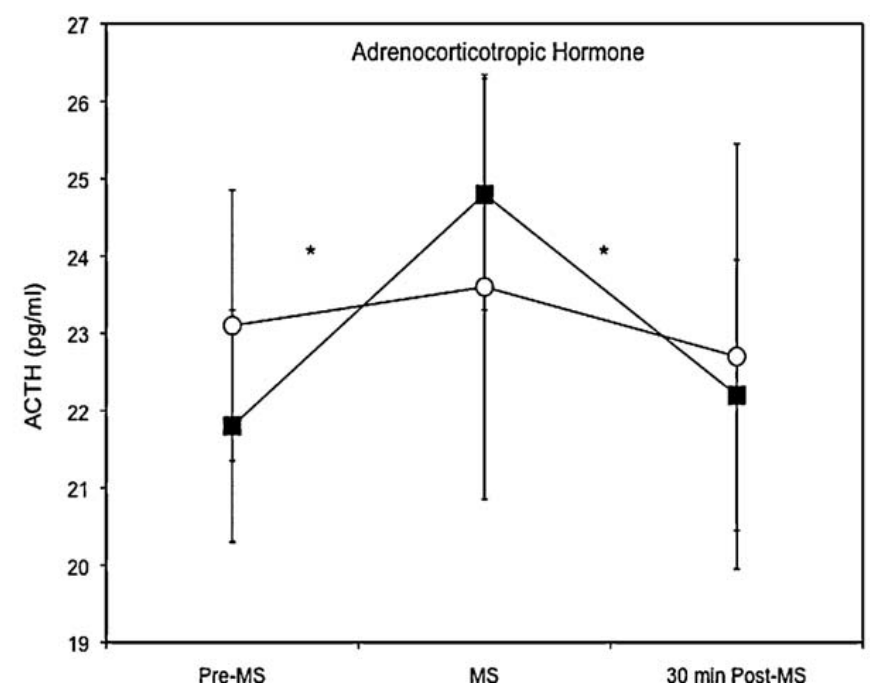
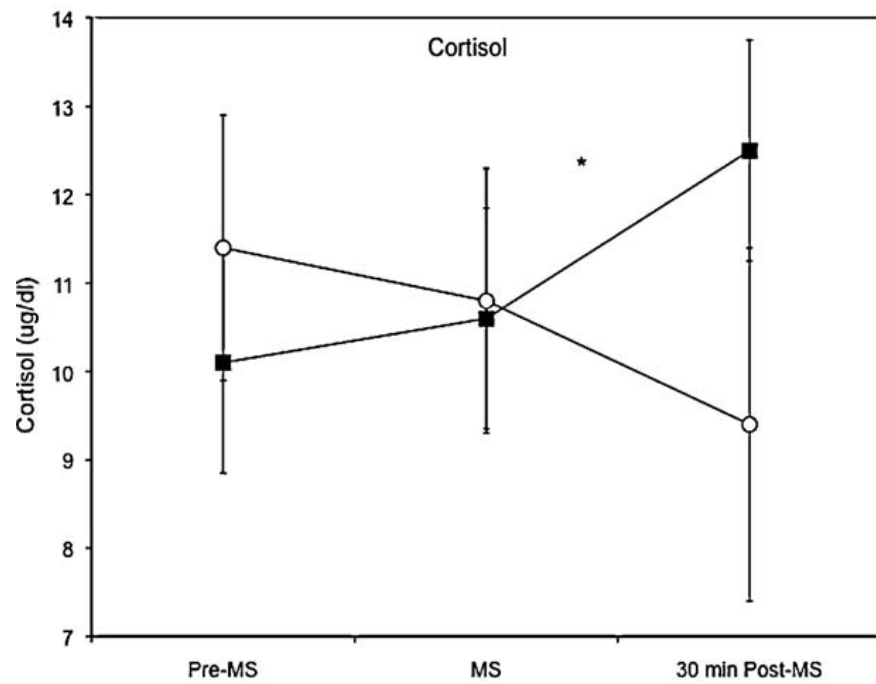
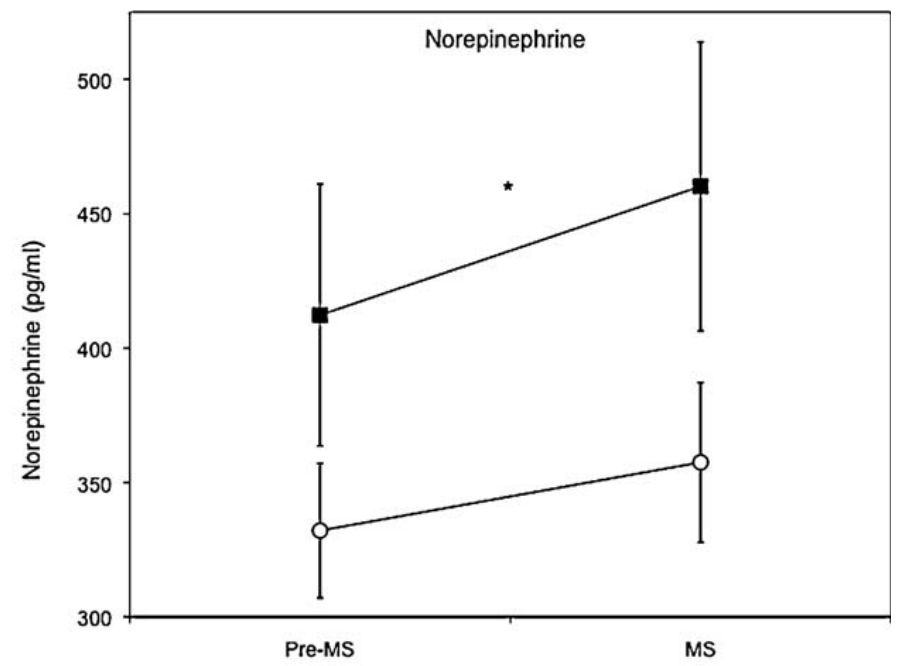
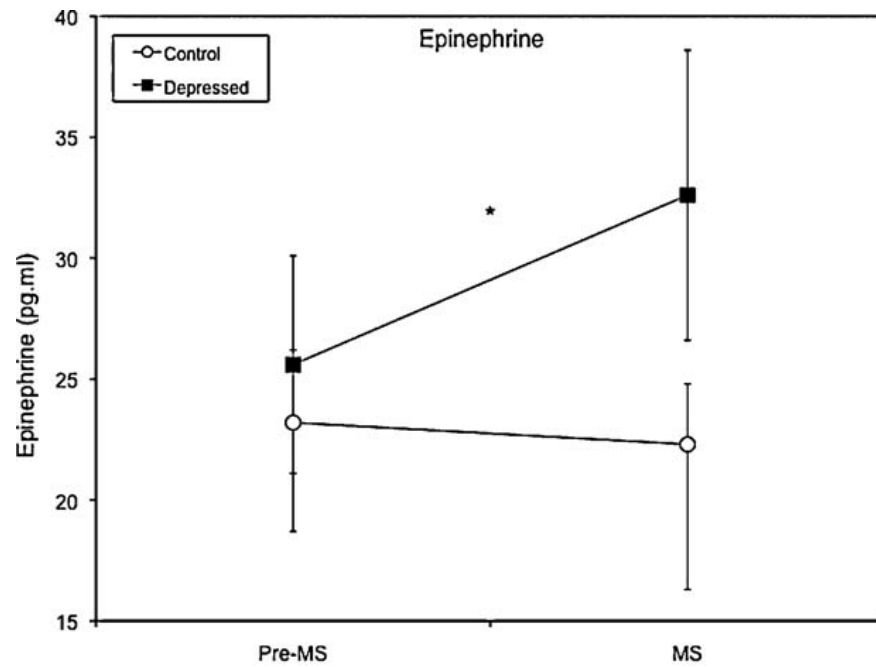
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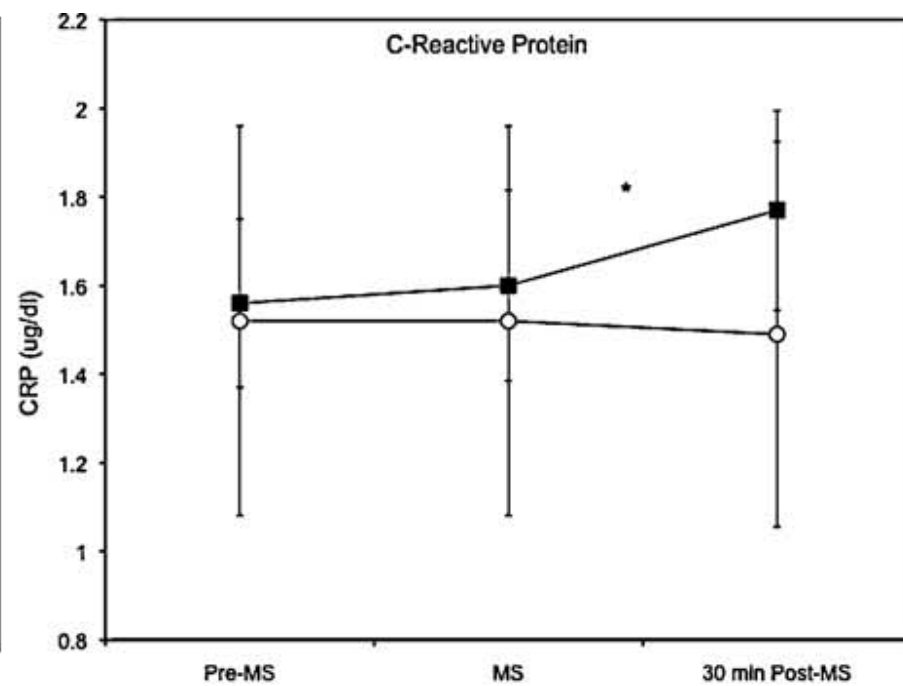
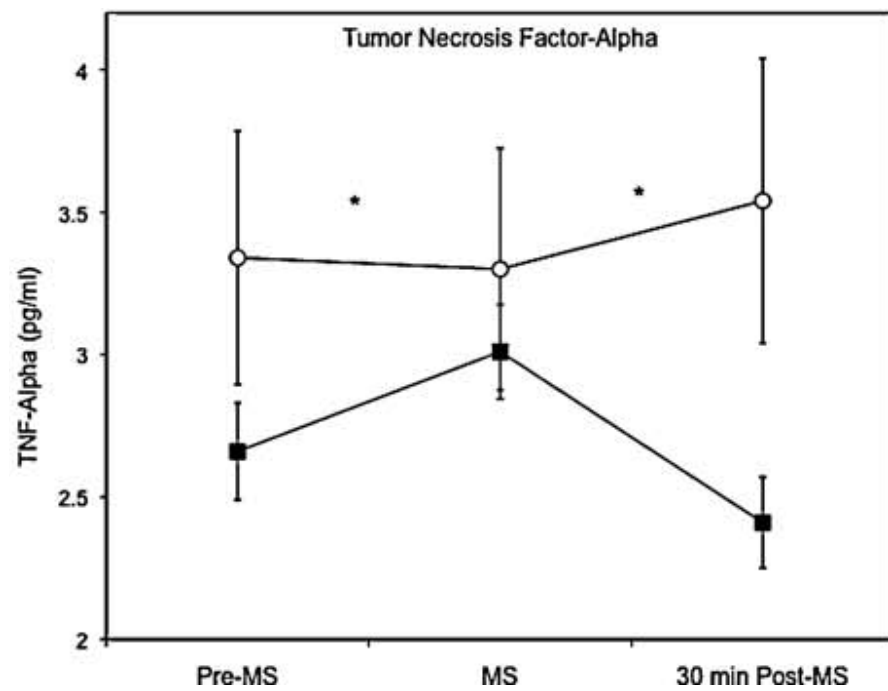
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Stress-Resistant Personality Types

- Personality types that are protective against stress
 - The Type B Personality
 - The Hardy Personality

The Type B Personality

- Identified by Rosenman and Friedman as polar opposite of Type A
 - Also known as non-Type A
 - Lower risk of heart disease
 - Doesn't preclude success and achievement

The Hardy Personality

- Identified by Kobasa and Maddi
- Exhibits three personality traits that protect against ravages of stress
 - Commitment (actively involved with life)
 - Control (internal locus of control)
 - Challenge (welcomes change)

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**"I spend a lot of time at the airport,
trying to lose my emotional baggage."**

While we may not be able to change our personality completely, we can change personality traits that tend to promote stress in our lives.