

COPING STRATEGIES AS A SOLUTION TO LIFE'S PROBLEMS

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Abstract

The article discusses the importance of coping strategies in solving life problems. Types of stressors are given, the concept of coping with life's difficulties are analyzed. It is shown that coping is directly associated with individual differences, that is, personal characteristics seriously affect both the process of selecting and using a coping strategy with an adverse event, and the results of such activities.

Keywords: coping strategies, life difficulties, crisis situations, stressful situation, stressors.

Situational demands that exceed the normal adaptive potential of a person are usually described by different terms: life difficulties, crisis situations, negative life events, stressful life events, traumatic events, unpleasant situations, life crises, economic deprivation, disasters, catastrophes. Each of these situations is full of difficulties or threats to human life and even leads to irreparable losses. Each of these situations restricts a person's activity and imposes requirements at a level that exceeds the limits of his abilities, moral and material resources. In a word, these situations can be called a set of stressors.

The concept of stress refers to a set of response reactions that occur in a person when faced with various life difficulties. This response of the individual can occur at physiological, cognitive, emotional and behavioral levels. Also, stress refers to resources that are limited by high-demand situations. According to another definition of stress, it represents an emergency rather than a person's reaction to negative events in life.

There are a number of definitions given to the concept of "life difficulties". In particular, negative life events are events that disrupt the normal course of life and cause physical or mental pain. If the event is unexpected and surprising, compelling and life-threatening, it is defined as a traumatic event. "Trauma," writes Perry, "represents a sudden, massive, and overwhelming threat to human security" [7: 155].

Such acute, overwhelming, unexpected, uncontrollable and unmanageable situations are called crises. Crises are considered the most complex form of stressor, as they carry a connotation of urgency, threat and the need for urgent action [5: 262]. Naturally, crises are also experienced by a person as negative events. Disasters are the most serious and dramatic form of crisis. This is how Fritz defined disaster: “an event concentrated in time and space, when a society or a relatively independent part of society is exposed to severe danger and exposes its members and the physical environment to such hardships that the social structure collapses and the implementation of all or some important functions becomes impossible. Thus, a disaster is an event that disrupts the vital functions of society. It affects the biological survival system (nutrition, blood, health, reproduction), the order system (division of labor, power models, cultural norms, social roles), the value system (values, general definition of reality, mechanisms of communication), and the motivation of people within all these systems” [2: 202]. Negative life events are sometimes called catastrophic if the intensity of their influence and the speed of their onset are so great that the changes caused by such events go beyond the usual changes in the environment, and their consequences are perceived as dramatic [3: 55]. All these events entail life difficulties. All of them create obstacles for society or an individual, the overcoming of which requires significant efforts, labor costs and excessive stress. These difficulties can be acute, chronic, varied, cumulative.

Stressors are classified by the type of life events or by the type of difficulties (financial, work, interpersonal, related to health, death of a loved one, etc.), by intensity (acute, moderate, moderate), by the magnitude of loss or threat, by duration (chronic, short-term), by the degree of manageability of events (controlled, uncontrolled), by the level of influence (macro- and microstressors). The identified types and characteristics of stressors are important primarily because on their basis a strategy of coping with negative life events is chosen, individual and collective resources are mobilized. The nature and intensity of experiencing the same type of circumstances vary depending on the meaning assigned to these circumstances [6: 264-264]. Estimates of stressful situations include, for example, estimates of damage or loss, threat or challenge. Loss fixes the damage (losses, insults, wounds) that has already been done. Threat is defined as the potential for damage or loss. When a threat looms, it is not known whether it will entail casualties. The challenge differs from the first two characteristics of events in its positive possibilities, although in



this situation, significant efforts of the individual are necessary to overcome the requirements of the circumstances. Understandably, losses often become acute stressors, while challenge and threat can be short-term or chronic. Life events are generally a discrete quantity. They are finite, arise and end at a certain time. However, chronic stressors are continuous and exist for a very long period.

In ordinary life situations, people's reactions are routine, carried out mostly automatically, without much effort and effort. But in a stressful situation, you need to make extraordinary decisions, make extraordinary efforts to cope with the threat or challenge, loss or damage. Coping with life's difficulties, according to Lazarus and Folkman, is "the constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts of the individual in order to manage specific external and (or) internal requirements, which are assessed by him as putting him to the test or exceeding his resources" [4: 141]. This means the following: the demands of the situation are unusual; they put the individual to the test; the demands of the situation exceed the resources of the individual; they make cognitive and behavioral efforts to cope with the demands of the situation. However, the authors of this definition speak only about attempts, about the efforts of a person, that is, about the very process of coping with life's difficulties. At the same time, efforts may be successful, or they may not give the desired result. Be that as it may, the task of coping with negative life circumstances is to either overcome difficulties, or reduce their negative consequences, or avoid these difficulties, or simply tolerate their presence.

Obviously, the very concept of "coping with life's difficulties" has different meanings. First, it is a constantly changing process. According to Wills and Shiftman, three stages can be distinguished in this process [9: 11]. The first stage is warning. Activities at this stage of coping with negative life events help the person prepare to overcome impending difficulties (for example, cognitive effort to interpret the situation differently). The second stage is directly coping with the problem. Here, cognitive and behavioral efforts are made to solve specific problems. In the third and last stage, a person deals with the consequences of a critical event. The purpose of this stage is to limit the amount of damage, to quickly return to the previous normal state. This is the recovery stage. According to another interpretation, coping with life's difficulties is solely an individual's reaction to stress [1: 5]. This means that cognitive and behavioral attempts to cope with a difficulty are made only when a person is experiencing stress. Although such an approach



makes it possible to distinguish the subject's usual, routine behavior in every day, familiar situations from his efforts to cope with negative life events, it does not take into account a number of circumstances. For example, this approach excludes the possibility of stress avoidance by an individual. In addition, according to this principle, a person's behavior before the onset of a stress reaction cannot be considered as an attempt to cope with life's difficulties. Sometimes they try to share the efforts to cope with undesirable events and the results of such activities. This approach helps to avoid preconceived judgments about the value of any attempt to cope with a problematic situation. On the other hand, the process is, as it were, divided into two parts: activities to cope with life's difficulties and the results of such activities.

Sometimes the concept of "coping with life's difficulties" is directly associated with individual differences. It is believed that personal characteristics seriously affect both the process of selecting and using a coping strategy with an adverse event, and the results of such activities. Hence, the interpretation of the concept of "coping with life's difficulties" as one of the personality traits. Finally, it should be noted that this concept is also interpreted as a resource management process. It is assumed that the process of coping with life's difficulties is essentially the process of mobilizing personal and environmental resources and the process of their optimal use.

It is clear that one can not cope with the crisis situation for a variety of reasons. However, two major classes of such causes should be distinguished. Despite all attempts to overcome adverse circumstances, failures. The strategy of coping with life's difficulties occurs, firstly, due to the displacement of actions, and secondly, due to erroneous actions. In the first case, real actions diverge from the original plans and intentions. In the second case, the actions performed are non-functional [8: 701]. The study of the causes of failure is extremely important, both from an academic and practical point of view. Failures not only generate new problems. They primarily deplete and destroy resources. In addition, failures in coping with life's difficulties themselves become stressors. In this paper, we have tried to show in the most integral form the most significant results of research in the field of studying the strategy of coping with life's difficulties. It was essential to do this not only because many people are experiencing significant economic and moral and psychological stress, but also because our researchers have not yet mastered the very conceptual approaches and methods for studying coping with life's difficulties.



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