

Stress

- Robert Sapolsky studying baboons in Kenya
 - social order includes dominant males being terrible and abusive to non-dominant
 - non-dominant show higher levels of stress hormone cortisol in bloodstream: chronic stress
 - associated with poor health outcomes, like heart disease, lowered immune response, etc – in HUMANS AND BABOONS
- Humans: stress response is not momentary like for most animals (aside from baboons), but chronic: money, work, family as stressors

Stress

- Which is worse?
 - vacation OR death of spouse
 - jail term OR being fired
 - retirement OR pregnancy/birth of child

Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS, 1967)

Life Event	LCU	
death of spouse	100	←
divorce	73	
marital separation	65	
jail term	63	←
death of close family member	63	
personal injury or illness	53	
marriage	50	
being fired	47	←
retirement	45	←
pregnancy	40	←
change in financial state	38	
more arguments with spouse	35	
change in work responsibilities	29	
child leaving home	29	
beginning/ending school	26	
change in eating habits	15	
vacation	13	←
Christmas	12	

Health, Stress & Coping

- Stress: the process of adjusting to or dealing with circumstances that disrupt, or threaten to disrupt, the course of a person's physical or psychological functioning

Psychological Stressors

- frustrating & pressured situations
- daily hassles & conflict
- life changes & strains
- chronic stress
- catastrophic events
- boredom

Issues in Stress Research

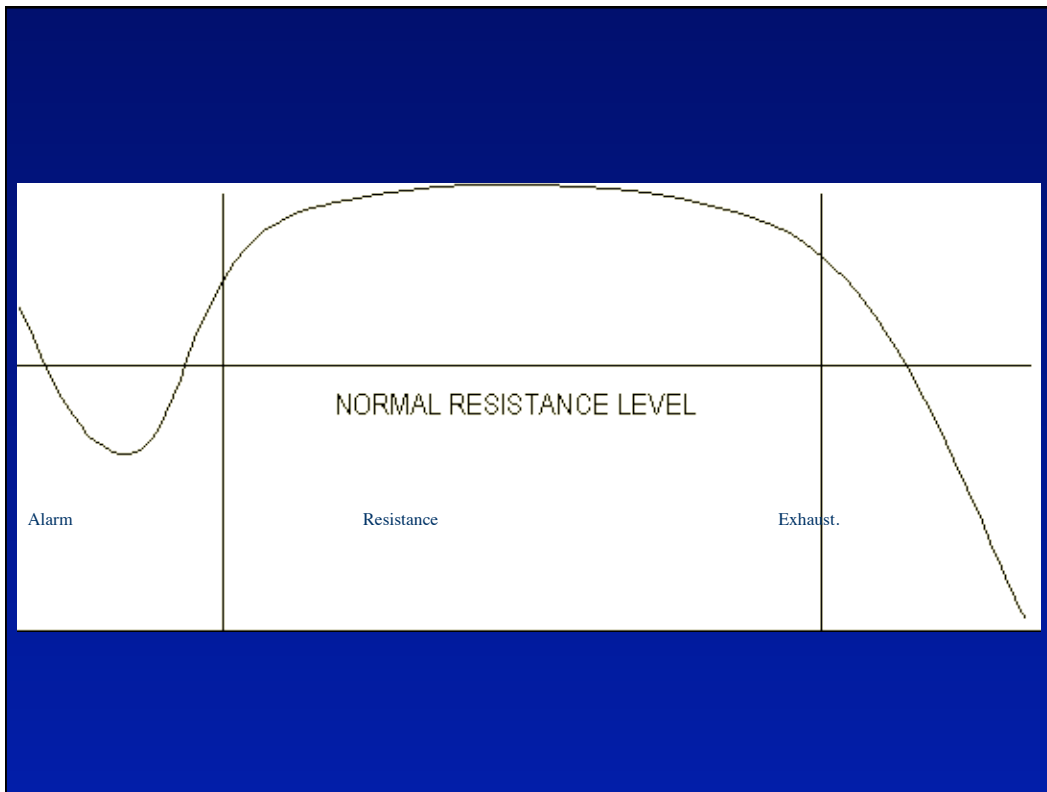
- Universality
- Predictability
- Clear remedies
- What influences the stress process

Stress Research Methodology

- Limited to studying stress in naturally occurring environments (for ethical reasons!)
- Types of stress measures:
 - Self-report
 - Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS)
 - measures stress in Life Change Units (LCUs)
 - Life Experiences Survey (LES)
 - measures stress as perception of how intensely neg/pos events were
 - daily hassles
 - Behavioral
 - Physiological/Biochemical

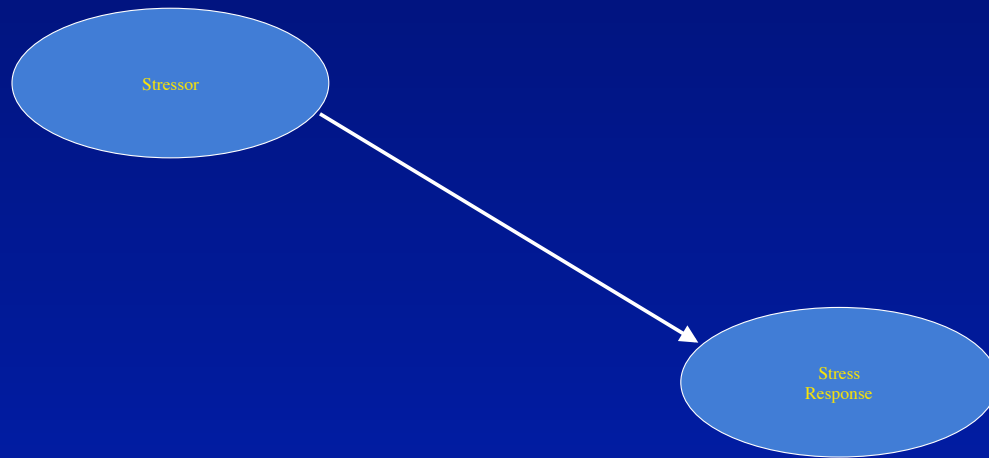
Stress Responses

- **Physical:** General Adaptation Syndrome
 - Alarm stage
 - e.g., increased respiration, heart rate and blood pressure
 - Resistance stage
 - increased production of steroids
 - Exhaustion stage
 - final rallying of defenses (similar to alarm stage), followed by death/breakdown

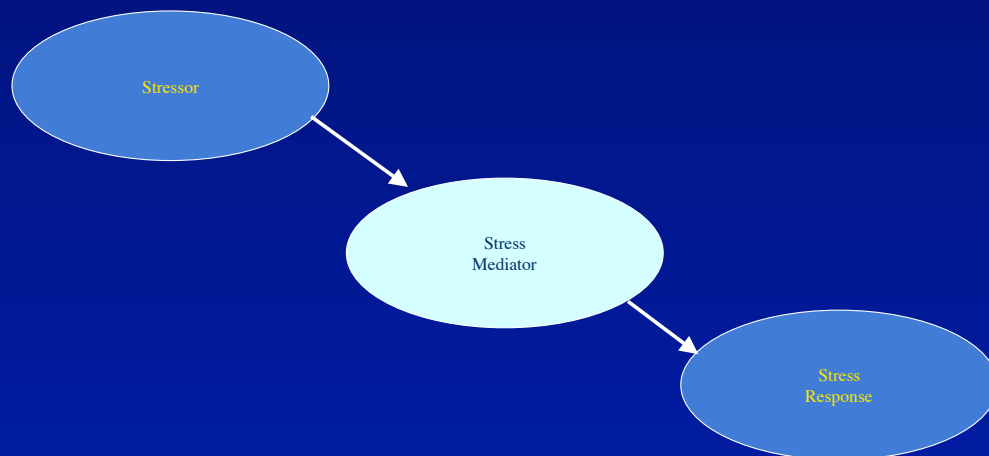


- **Psychological**
 - emotional (e.g., anxiety, depression)
 - cognitive
 - loss of memory, difficulty concentrating
 - catastrophizing ... dwelling on potential outcomes
- **Behavioral**
 - strained facial expressions, shaky voice, posture change
 - aggression
- **Burnout & PTSD**

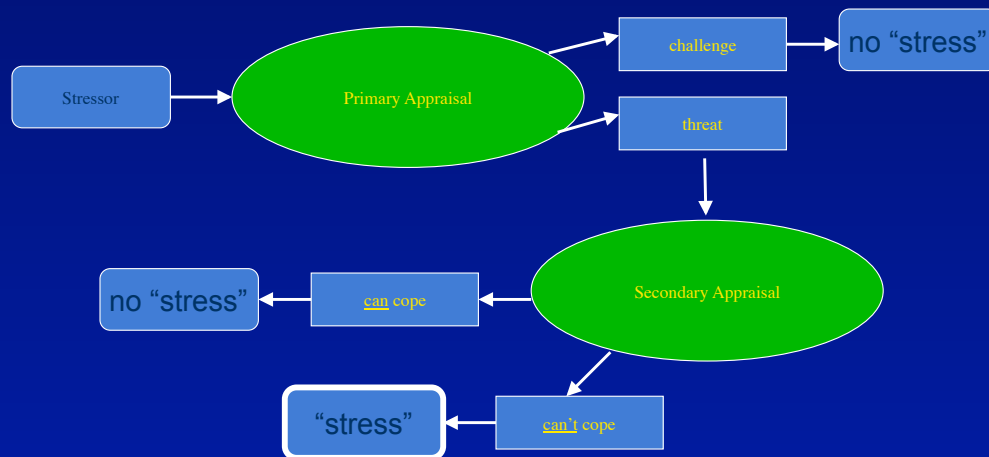
Stress Mediators



Stress Mediators



Mediator: Cognitive Appraisal



Other Stress Mediators

- Social Support
- Personality
 - Hardiness
 - similar to locus of control (internal vs. external)
 - Negative affectivity
 - Type A behavior
 - (Twice as likely to suffer from heart disease)

“Prescription” for Stress

(AKA, How to make yourself a complete basket case in Three Easy Steps!)

- Remember that worry is essential
 - No important task can be undertaken without it.
 - Tell yourself: If you're not worrying, if things are going smoothly, if life seems easy, you're doing something wrong.
- Over-identify with everyone in your life.
 - When they get upset, be sure that you get upset. Absorb their worries and make them your own.
 - Do this with friends, co-workers, and family.
 - Also with the starving people of the world.
- Remind yourself constantly: Life ought to be perfect.
 - Anything less is failure.
 - When something goes right, quickly remind yourself of all the things that are (or could go) wrong.