

You Can Cope!

Coping with Stressful Life Situations and Overcoming Depression, Anxiety and Stress

An Introduction

Coping with stressful situations often present some of the most difficult challenges that can confront a person and can lead to feelings of depression, anxiety and stress.

Not only do people often experience dramatic changes in lifestyle and roles as a result of stressful life situations and events, they also enter into new daily living arrangements involving new difficulties and hazards. Dealing with stressful situations often involves multiple challenges including:

- coping with personal crises and stressful life events,
- changing work roles and environments,
- dealing with unfamiliar and at times difficult people,
- maintaining family networks.

The enormous tasks associated with dealing with stressful life events often lead to experiences of stress, anxiety and depression when problems or setbacks arise.

Feelings of stress and frustration are recognisable as increased physical tension, irritability, poor concentration and anger.

Feelings of anxiety are recognisable as increased nervousness and fearfulness, increased heart rate and breathing, poor concentration and physical tension.

Feelings of depression are recognisable as low mood, thoughts of hopelessness, lack of interest in enjoyable activities and social withdrawal.

The Three Areas Implicated in Stressful Life Situations

When we encounter difficult and stressful situations we often have trouble coping. In examining areas within ourselves which make coping more difficult, three key areas have been identified. These are:

1. Thinking - Problems with thinking and unhelpful thinking patterns.
2. Behaviour - Problems with coping behaviours - what we do about life stressors.
3. Meaning and Purpose - Problems with understanding what is happening in terms of our greater life journey and the level of meaning and happiness we encounter both daily and over the long-term.

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Another area which will be covered in *You Can Cope!* is our own biological system - specifically the role of lifestyle and medication in enhancing our ability to cope. In some people there are biological factors such as sleep deprivation, predisposition to depression, and medical conditions which may make them more vulnerable to problems whilst coping with difficult life situations. In these cases, whilst biological treatments may be needed, changes in Thinking, Behaviour and Meaning will nonetheless reduce excessive difficulties.

You Can Cope! has been written to provide those of us who experience stressful life situations or struggle with depression, anxiety and stress with some simple truths about what causes coping problems and some effective solutions to enable us cope better and experience more meaning and fulfilment in our lives.

The strategies outlined in *You Can Cope!* are based on principles and practices developed through clinical research and have been shown to be highly effective in assisting many people in reducing stress and enhancing their ability to cope.

As you read through *You Can Cope!* make sure you take the time to think through and apply the information presented into your own life situation. Remember the old saying "you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink". *You Can Cope!* will "lead you to water" but it is up to you to "drink". So when you read *You Can Cope!* begin to take active steps to change the way you think and enhance your ability to cope with stressful life events.

The book *You Can Cope!* is available for order from www.psyhealth.com.au