
Coping and Coping Styles in Personality and Treatment Planning: Introduction to the Special Series



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Coping is a complex process. It is variously described as a situational and as a trait-like response, as a response to stress and as a disposition to respond to change. In this article, we review the current research on coping within the context of considering the contributions of the articles presented in this series. We present two broad views of coping, the more general one under the title of "coping response" defines coping as containing emotional, behavioral, and cognitive qualities. It is generally considered to be a stress-specific pattern by which an individual's perceptions, emotions, and behaviors prepare for adapting and changing. The more narrow view of coping is described here as "coping style" and represents a more observable but general style of interacting. In this usage, coping is a trait-like variable that is activated when an environment changes in some way. It resembles other personality qualities and describes dispositions to respond in certain ways. In this article, we consider the implications and extant knowledge about coping within these two definitions, with special consideration to the prediction of treatment processes and outcomes. The articles in this series are discussed both in terms of extant research on these two views of coping and in terms of their contributions to the available literature on coping and coping responses. © 2003 Wiley Periodicals, Inc. *J Clin Psychol* 59: 1045–1047, 2003.

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With this issue of the *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, we introduce a new feature—a special issue based on archival articles on a selected topic. This feature is designed to address the critical question facing any scientific journal, “Are we making a difference?” Accordingly, we will periodically present a series of articles from our archives, published in the past decade, that are devoted to a topic of relevance to the field. These archived articles will be republished as a set and accompanied by a discussion. The discussion, usually by an invited expert, will address two cardinal questions: (a) Do these articles make a contribution to our understanding of this topic? and (b) have they presented results that are consistent with or add to our understanding of this topic?

We will begin this new feature with two special issues on the topic of coping and coping styles. The first of these, contained in this issue, will be focused on coping and coping styles in personality and treatment planning. The second, published in the following issue of the *Journal*, will address dispositional and contextual perspectives on coping.

This first issue on coping and coping styles is comprised of ten articles drawn from the papers that have appeared in this journal on this topic since 1993. Each of these articles have addressed some aspect of the role of coping and coping styles in psychopathology, personality, or treatment planning. The articles are followed by a discussion of these issues and their relevance to the field. The Editor (L.E.B.) of the *Journal of Clinical Psychology* has taken the opportunity of serving as the discussant for this initial issue. Hereafter, the Editor will serve only to coordinate this feature.

The ten articles on which the current issue is based are wide ranging. We have selected articles to ensure that a broad view of the issues is addressed, as applied to coping and coping styles. The very breadth of these issues requires us to address the question of the meaning of the concepts coping and coping styles. We have attempted to address this issue both by reference to some of the published correlates of these concepts to other measures (e.g., Endler, Parker, & Butcher, 1993) and by inspecting the relationships of various descriptions and definitions of coping and coping styles to specific groups of patients who manifest given symptoms (e.g., Alford & Gerrity, 1995; Edwards & Holden, 2001; Franken, Hendriks, Haffmans, & van der Meer, 2001; Haines & Williams, 1997; Marlowe, 1998), and to the relationships between these concepts and the development of personality and psychopathology (Greenwald & Harder, 1997; Şahin, Ulusoy, & Şahin, 1993; Vollrath, Alnaes, & Torgersen, 1996; Wolfradt & Engelmann, 1999).

These studies have used measures of coping resources, such as the Coping Resources Inventory and indices of sociotropy and autonomy, and indices of both general coping skills, such as the COPE and the Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations, and situation-specific coping responses, such as the Coping Strategies Inventory and adaptations of the Ways of Coping. They have focused on the associations between Axis I and other clinical syndromes and these indicators of coping, on the links between coping and dissociative experiences, fantasies and daydreams, depression and anxiety, and suicidal ideation; and on changes in coping associated with treatment. As such, the selected articles provide a diverse window on some of the important issues in this area.

The second series of articles on this topic will appear in the December, 2003 issue of this *Journal* and will be coordinated by the Co-Editor, Dr. Rudolf Moos. This latter issue will pursue in greater depth the introduction that is made here to the role of measurement, and will examine in greater depth conceptualizations of coping and coping styles and how they have been defined by alternative assessment procedures. Dr. Moos also will serve as the discussant for this latter series of articles and will focus on how to best integrate the relevant concepts.

By reproducing articles already published, but doing so within a collection of related articles, we hope to be able to further our goal of ensuring that articles published in this

journal have clinical utility and value. Collections of related articles may have greater impact on the field, when put into perspective through the eyes of an expert discussant, than individual articles that may lose their signal quality in the background noise of other articles.

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