

Human Adjustment Processes
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Module - 7
Lecture - 5
Facets of human adjustment:
Stress, Resilience and Coping

Fine, yesterday what we did was that we talked about the posttraumatic stress and we also discussed about the argument, whether it should be designated as a disorder or not. Then, we finally came to a point where we did touch upon the issue that only a selective percentage of the people, who suffer extreme adversity in life; they only develop post traumatic stress.

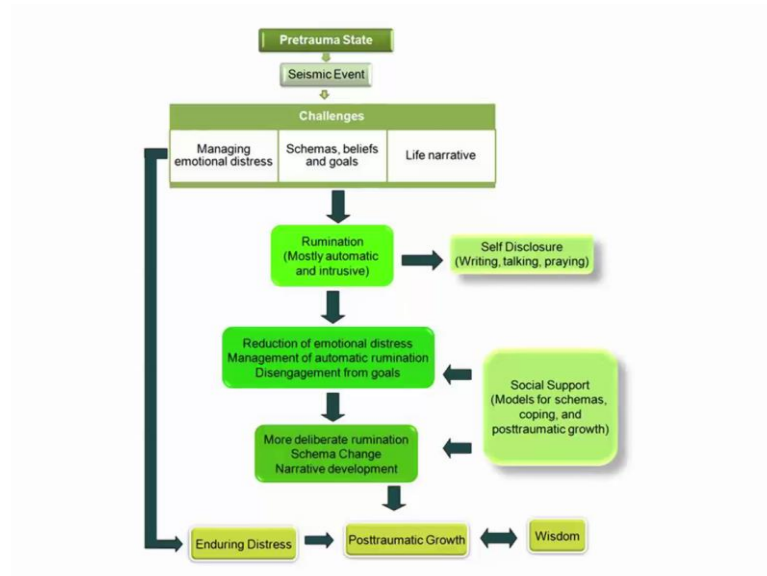
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Posttraumatic Growth

- Formally introduced by Tedeschi and Calhoun in 1995
- “the positive psychological change experienced as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life circumstances”
– Tedeschi & Calhoun (1995)

This had let to know another construct, what is called as posttraumatic growth. We saw the definition; we also saw this fears in which the change are a permanently visible. Today, we are going to talk about two of the theoretical models that try to describe, how a person grows in the aftermath of a traumatic experience.

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Now, this is the functional descriptive model given by Tedeschi and Calhoun. What this says is that you have a pretrauma state. Do not note down this structure, now. I will mail it to you. There is no point noting it down. So, you have a pretrauma state, that is, when the actual catastrophic event took place, the period before that. Then you have something called seismic event. What Tedeschi and Calhoun did was that they said that the traumatic experience of life can be compared to severe seismic event; a major earth quake where, the alignment of whole lot of things changes. So, this said that actually, what happens that a seismic event comes and then, it challenges you at three different fronts.

One, it challenges you to manage your emotional distress. So, the overall, the outcome of traumatic experience would be extreme distress, which you will have to manage; one. Two, there might be extreme challenges that basically question your schemas, your beliefs and your goals. Schema is like, you have understood that this is what the world is; this is what a particular relationship is. So, that the whole fabric gets challenged; you have to reinterpret them. Your belief changes; usually, we all have a tendency of somehow expecting, these things happen, but it cannot happen to me, when it really happens to you, then your belief gets shaken, and the goal that you have set for yourself; your intermediate goals, may be, your ultimate goal; that gets challenged. Third, the way you have been narrating your life experiences; that also suffers a major challenge. Now, the challenges that all these friends would primarily mean, that you have to struggle a

whole lot, in terms of overcoming the distress, managing the distress, in terms of redefining your life narratives, in terms of reinterpreting your own beliefs, goals and schemas.

Now, the challenge that we see at all these fears, they finally, make you ruminate. Now, in psychology we talk about two different processes, opposite processes; rumination and reflection. You know the distinction between the two. Rumination is where; see first, before coming to rumination, just think of the usual life experiences. If you are told to recollect your own experiences of whatsoever had happened to you, you would have a whole range of experience. So, part of the experience which would be very positive, which would make you very happy, when you reflect, when you look back on that. Part of the experience which will make you very sad, and so forth; because the experiences would always being basically, a mixed band. Therefore, there are people who atoms, when they have to recollect their past experiences. They choose only negatively charged experiences.

I had a friend, who behaved very badly with me. Even my father did so. There was a stranger, travelling with me; he also did so. So, what you do, these are discreet phenomenas; something happened at 6 years of age, something happened at 12 years of age; something happened at 26 years of age; but then you know, selectively pick and choose, I am (()) them together. Such type of recollection of your experience is rumuditive. The opposite processes could be reflectively in nature. Reflective process would mean, that you again look back at your past experiences, and you say, life for everybody would always be a mix; I also had some adverse experiences, but now, when I look back, I think for many of those things, I myself was a responsible; if I would not have done these, then these would not have happened.

That person I did not do anything, but he did something bad, but human beings are like this. So, the ultimate thought that you finally gain in the process of recollection, is not negatively charged. Usually it is either positively charged, or what you do is that you remove the valiancy; the negative, positive charge of that experience, you remove. Therefore, overall in the reflective mode, you say that I think, I did something wrong; I do not know, probably, have understood it must better now. So, overall if you think, reflective thoughts would be positively charged, that way. That is the difference between rumunity, when rumination and reflection. In this case, according to Tedeschi and

Calhoun model, once sudden things in your life are challenged, you start ruminating. All negativities will come back to you, and mostly they are automatic and intrusive in nature. So, you do not try to recollect your experience is of the past, but it starts pouring in; that is the intrusive thought. Now, when this happens, two simultaneous processes will take place.

One, there could be a process of self disclosure; self disclosure in the form of writing. So, you start making a note of your ex adverse experience; you start talking to others, what actually happen to me? Study, we took an example of somebody who was serving at Shamiyana restaurant, when 26 11 took place, you talk about your experience, or you participate in praying. So, these are the methods of self disclosure. Basically, what you do is that you have all those ruminative thoughts and you start sharing. Two forms of sharing are verbal sharing; when you talk to others, it is a verbal sharing. In the case of prayer also, you talk to God, so verbal sharing. In the case of writing, you note down, you pen down your experience, then what happens? This rumination undergoes reduction of emotional distress. It also leads to management of automatic rumination and disengagement from goals. So, because you have been involved in certain type of disclosures, finally, you realized that you are able to see, somewhat decline in the emotional distress, which you initial experience, when the seismic event that take place.

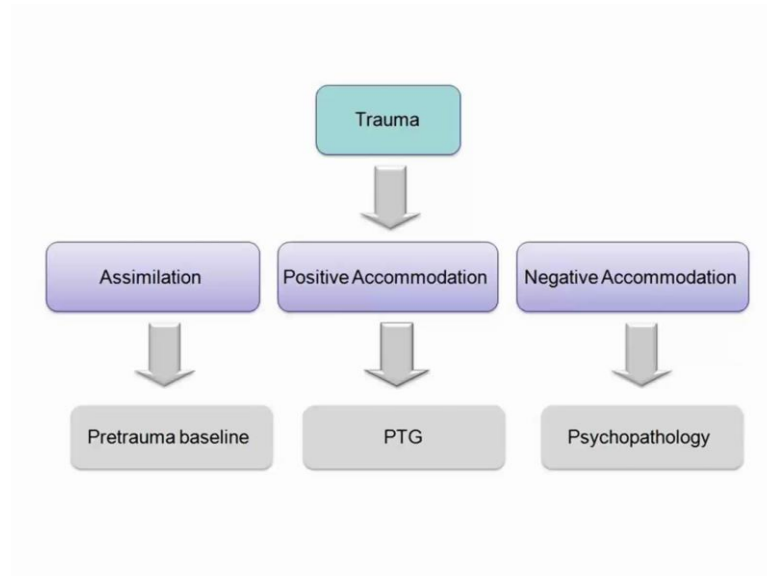
So, this is by default, means that self disclosure as a module, helps an individual minimize the level of emotional distress. Now, this automatic rumination that was taking place, we have all those intrusive thoughts coming, you think that you are now able to manage them. But still, you find that you are still disengaged from your goal; you do not find the earlier goals that you have set for yourself; you do not find it still very charming, and therefore, you do not move ahead that way.

Then, gradually, you come to a state where, you have more deliberate rumination. Deliberate rumination would mean that you make an effort to recollect those experiences. Now, it is no more automatic. Your schema undergoes changes. So, the way you are interpreting life, the way you are interpreting the worldly phenomena's, now, you have a fresh definition of it. Then, sudden new forms of narratives will develop. The way you use to explain your life experiences, which will suddenly undergo a big change. Now, at these two steps, when you have the reduction of the emotional distress, and when you have know more deliberate rumination, social support plays an important role.

So, you have models for schemas, coping and posttraumatic growth, means you look at those models, who also had similar experiences and it helps you, regain yourself realign yourself and think that if he can, if she can and why cannot I. There would be other forms of social support mechanism, and social support mechanism further, facilitates the reduction of the emotional distress; makes the rumination process more deliberate, rather making it more and more automatic. It also finally helps you, what you call reshape your own representation of the world, the life experiences and therefore, it plays an important role there. Now, after all these changes have taken place, when you realize that you have change in your schema, when your life narrative changes; that stage that you obtain is posttraumatic growth.

This posttraumatic growth in turn, makes you wiser. Your wisdom in turn, constantly gives a feedback to you; posttraumatic growth. Simultaneously, these challenges that you had experienced long back, its keeps on coming in enduring distress, and it hits you. So, this primarily would mean, that even though, you have evolved as a much better human being, the catastrophic experience that you had; you do not forget it. That distress will at times, untune. The only good thing is that, because now, the wisdom also keeps on giving feedback to you and therefore, once your earlier traumatic experience flashes back, your wisdom also tells you that; yes, I know that, I still remember that. But it keeps happening. It has happened to one 1,004,096 people in this world, till now. So, this is how this model tries to describe, how posttraumatic growth takes place, but I must tell you that this again, a theoretical model.

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Then comes the other model what is called as the organismic valuing theory. Those of you, who have a gone through pace5151 course, must be aware of these. There was, what you call, there was a school of thought in psychology, are called the humanistic and existential psychology. Humanistic and existential psychology basically, professes the importance of the person. So, you as an individual is always given utmost priority, compared to rest all psychological processes, that are taken care of, while defining your cycle. Organismic valuing theory runs on the broader frame work, that has been given by the humanistic and existential thought is psychology

What this theory proposes is that you have a normal baseline level, then you experience the trauma, and when you experience the trauma, two possibilities are there. Either, you assimilate the experience or you accommodate the experience. If you accommodate the experience, then again, it could either, be a positive accommodation or it could be a negative accommodation. Now, assimilation and accommodation would be like say, you have a thread like this, and you take a crystal, or say, you take another thread and put it near the original thread, which is running continuously. So, if it is just an extra addition, which is what is called as assimilation. Accommodation would be where, the running thread accommodates; it leaves this place. So, that the new thread can be put inside, and it could be woven along with the original thread as is continuously running. So, accommodation and assimilation of experience is like this. So, when you have your continued life experience with and additional attachment, that is a process of

assimilation. If you are able to assimilate your experience, according to the organismic valuing theory, you are finally, able to regain your pre trauma baseline. So, the state where you were before this seismic event; you would invest sometime in trying to assimilate your experience. Once you have assimilated it, you go back to your pre trauma baseline. You are able to run your life in the way, you were doing that. If you are going to accommodate your experience, means if you are going to realign your past experiences, so that, the new experiences can be fitted into it, then there are two possibilities; either, you positively accommodate it or you negatively accommodate it. If you negatively tried to accommodate your experience, then according to this model, it leads to psychopathology.

Psychopathology, in this case would be posttraumatic stress disorder. If you are going to positively accommodate it, then you attain what is called as posttraumatic growth, fine. Again, this is a theoretical model, because this model was proposed initially, as part of doctoral thesis. Therefore, some amount of empirical data is in world, in terms of proposing the model. The only difficulty, as of know is that there is not a very prescribed row; that positive accommodation means, which is done this and this; which is positive. In case, instead of taking a left turn, if you take a right turn from a, which leads you to another direction, where it is negative accommodation. That whole sequence of, even the way it was prescribed in the earlier model; this model; that still, you do not find in the case of organismic valuing theory. Couple of years back, I think 3 to 4 years back, one of my PHD student had done a work on posttraumatic stress and growth, in the Buddhist community, which is a shrine here in Dharmashala.

Basically, it was the monks and the nuns. I do not exactly remember the numbers or sample size; I do not remember, but it was a good number, I guess, perhaps, 200 plus number of monks and nuns. Primarily, they are, what you call as, the primary inducers of the stress were identified and then, different things were taken into account, but finally, we had taken ruminative thoughts; means rumination, reflection. We have taken cognitive emotional processing, how do you process your own emotions? How do you, to what extent, you are able regulate your own emotion? And then finally, trying to find out that what actually leads to what? So, if you put it in a regression model, it will tell you that these are primarily the denominators of this problem, or these things lead to this. I must tell you that based on that empirical data; we did find the importance of ruminative

process, reflective process and cognitive emotion regulation. Of course, in Tredeschi's model, there is no prescription of cognitive emotion regulation. It talks about the distress factor; emotional distress and intrusive nature of it; the automated nature of it; and then, reduction in the in nature of emotional distress, and finally, making the rumination more and more deliberate, from the automatic end.

So, partly, what we empirically found out from the Buddhist community, here in India was, in those seen in this model, at the same time assimilation, of course, we did not check, but what was very interesting to observe was, posttraumatic stress and growth; it might appear, either, you develop pathology or you develop a growth pattern out of posttraumatic experience, means either or. But in reality, either or situation does not exist. So, there could be a possibility that you are still under distress, extreme emotional distress, but still you are evolving. For certain duration, the stress and the growth can run parallel. After a particular limit, then you realize the growth starts surmounting the stress, and this is how you are able to manage it. So, this was all about stress and growth.

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Resilience

There is another thing that we could have talked about, but we would deliberately not go into the details of it, what is called as acute stress disorder. The type of stress we were talking about here, was primarily simple or complex type of stress, which leads to certain changes in the psychological, behavioral and the physical experience, but we did not go into that domain of a stress, which is clinically considered to be disorder. Deliberately, I

thought initially, we will do it, but then I thought there is no point talking about stress as a disorder. So, we have deliberately, removed it from here. So, we would not talk about the acute stress disorder, fine. Now, you talk of two positively oriented know constructs of psychology; resilience and coping.

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Resilience

- “the ability to restore balance following a difficult experience and integrate it into the backup of one’s total life experiences”
– Langer (2004)
- Individuals’ affective, cognitive, and behavioural perseverance
- Optimum utilization of internal and external resources for positive coping with socio-economic constraints

This is the definition given by Langer. He says that resilience actually, is the ability to restore balance, following a difficult experience, and integrate it into the back up of one’s total life experiences. So, primarily, this is your ability to bounce back, once you start sliding down. You have a difficult experience, but resilience gives you that strength to restore your balance, but interesting thing also is that, it finally, gets integrated into your total life experience. This primarily, would mean that there are different words, I must tell you. Now days, in scientific terminology, we do subscribe to only one term called resilience, but you would find many synonymous words, being used in the literature earlier, like hardiness, was one construct which actually, defines resilience. So, all together, if you make a literature surveys, 6 to 7 different types of words were being used to describe this phenomena, but gradually, now people have come to an agreement that all these words, synonymous words, actually, represents resilience; nothing else.

Now, what happens? It is basically, it reflects the perseverance of an individual. Two certain affective cognitive and behavioral situations; you are able to optimally utilize your internal and your external resources, so that you can positively cope with the

situation, given the socio economic constraints that we have. So, whatever environmental constraints that you have, you would try to optimally utilize your internal and external resources, but then, you would certainly know the important thing in resilience is, that you have ratability of perseveration. So, if you know, that this is how it will be done, you do it once, twice, thrice, tens and twenty times and finally, it happens. I do not know if you have read this story. There is a popular story usually, prescribed sometime in the primary class days, in Hindi text. Long back, I had read it, that there was a mother with a small baby. The mother always uses to go to the well to fetch some water. She uses to have that earthen pot, around which, she would coil a rope, and that using a pulley, the rope will go into well and this is how she will fetch water. Beautifully, this story continues; the end of the story has two important things. One, that the rope happens to every day, crisscross stone surface. It was a wooden pulley, but then, there was a stone, and rope always use to move on the stone, and although, stones are capable, if you rub rope against stone finally, the rope will get cut.

But this story, at the end, you realize that the rope has mark. Mark, because the rope always uses to move on that stones. So, the stone had that deep mark; one, and two, that the mother use to keep the earthen pot again, on a platform made of stone. Although, it was earthen pot, but because it was kept so many times, that the stone itself had developed a particular shape there. Basically, this story was trying to say that it is not that how strong or how weak you are, but actually, how perseverant you are. So, even rope, if it keeps moving on the stone repeatedly, it will leave a mark on this stone. If the earthen pot is put repeatedly, on the stone, it will leave a mark permanently there. So, perseverance, when we talk about with respective resilience, is equivalent to the phenomena, which was described in this story. It could be an affective perseverance. Imagine a situation, where people are passionate about a cause; they fight for a cause and they themselves suffer in this whole process. You would realize that these are the people whose passion does not die because of their adverse experiences.

So, experiences might be extremely adverse, but they would not lose their passion for whatever, they are doing. There could be both the positive and the negative interpretation, based on, from which side you are looking at the phenomena. But then, people who are actually, indulged in that process are convinced that they are doing it for a greater cause. You would realize that their affective component becomes more and

more stable in that process; so, is their cognitive process. Their whole thought, they have well thought of the things, before they were entered into this periphery and now, they are well determined at, if not during my life time, during life time of my second generation, third generation, but one day, this change will come. Look at all those who involved in freedom movement, for example.

Many of them died; they did not know what will happen next, but they were convinced in terms of their thought processes, that it has begun, it will take time, but if not during my life time, may be, my next generation, and if not even their time and then, by the time, third generation comes into me; one day the target will be achieved. That is perseverance in their thought process. Similarly, (()).

(()).

You yourself are confident in it, willing that I can certainly make this and once, you have disturbance source, struggles were pouring in strength for a for a it is suddenly, but it is in the case of resilience's and it would be realize we could changes back also example People who fight for much bigger causes, they have been found out to be much more resilient, compared to people, who are not engaged in such processes. I am not (()) that everybody should fight for bigger cause. This is what has been empirically found and now, we come to the last topic, which has been included in this module. There, we will be talking about coping. Coping, as you must have realized, but this time is basically, that process which describes the phenomena of overcoming all the problems, that one has experienced and trying to either, (()) developing capability of managing it and further moving ahead in life. You remember we had talked about the appraisal of different emotions.

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Coping

- “constantly changing cognitive, behavioural, (and emotional) efforts to manage particular external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person”
– Lazarus & Folkman (1984)
- It refers to ‘the cognitive way of managing the intake of emotionally arousing information’

We take the definition of coping given by Lazarus and Folkman. They say that coping refers to constantly changing cognitive behavioral and emotional efforts, to manage particular external, and or internal demands, that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person. So, if you realize that the situation, that you are experiencing, these two (()) for you or it finally, cuts on the resources that are available to you, and therefore, you realize that your resources are getting depleted. In such situations, coping basically, helps you manage the constantly changing situation, and the cognitive behavioral at emotional level. It helps you manage your external or internal demands. So, it would, say like, if you take the example of see-saw, your demand would suddenly, pour powering in the beginning and then, coping comes into picture and hence, you strike that balance.

So, it refers to the cognitive way of managing the intake of emotionally arousing information. The movement you realize that your resources are being depleted, it is a great sense of discomfort to you. The discomforts you experience will finally, lead to certain emotion arouses and therefore, coping provides you a cognitive mechanism of managing those emotions. In terms of explaining, how many types of coping we have, it is very difficult to say.

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Approaches to Coping

- **Problem-focused coping:**
 - Efforts directly controlling and changing sources of psychological burden (learning new skills, removing barriers, and generating alternative solutions)

- **Emotion-focused coping:**
 - Managing emotional responses to stressor
 - wishful thinking
 - seeking emotional support
 - social comparison

If you make the list, it will be a much longer list. If you look at the overall development which says here, primarily, if you take different types of coping and put them in terms of approaches, that has been taken, you can do it two fold.

One is called as problem focused and emotion focused coping approach. This is the initial proposal, was given by Lazars and Folkman. Little later, when people started talking about cognitive copy, and nowadays, people also talk of something called proactive coping. What is problem focused coping? Problem focused coping includes efforts, which talks about direct control, and change of resources of psychological burdens, such as learning new skills, removing barriers and generating alternative solutions. So, basically, the coping is looking ahead; break the situation, in terms of whole set of problems; you break into pieces. For each of the subset of the problem, you formulate a new solution. Because you are now able to manage it, because it says, that you cope in terms of say, learning new skills. If you learn and new skills basically, means if you had a problem and you realize, that you are not capable of handling it, with a given type of resources that are available to you, unless you learnt new skills and then, for which you learn the new skill.

Now, because you have learned the new things, therefore, you are able to handle the situation. It could be as small as a situation, like say, going to the preprimary schools, a child who resists the school for the first time, and finds in extremely difficult even to stay

for two hours in the school. From that point, when you finally come to a level where, two hours of nonstop lecture, you can still listen to it. Three hours of lab session and you can still participate there. So, that is like developing new skill. The nature of the problem keeps on changing. The demand that is put forth in front of you, that also gets magnified, gradually. But along with magnification of problem, you also keep on adding new skills to yourself and therefore, you are able to cope it; that is problem focused coping.

Emotion focused coping basically, refers to managing the emotional responses to stressor, such as wishful thinking, seeking emotional support or social comparisons. Now, wishful thinking is an interesting constructing psychology. We would be going to the details of it, but you find very interesting type of descriptions, even some one of empirical research has also taken place, with respect to wishful thinking. It is more like, say, if this would have happened that, then that would not have happened. There is another word in psychology used for these, what is called as counterfactual thinking? Counterfactual thinking is something as happened, we reflect back and you say, that this would not have happened, if that would not have happened. If I would have done things like this, then it would have been like that. So, that is counterfactual thought. I think, in defining counterfactual thoughts, you have positive and negative counterfactual thoughts.

In one case, you would say, that things would have been better, if it would have been done that way. In the other cases, say, thankfully, what is this happened, it could have even worst. Say for example, you are travelling in a boat and the boat capsizes. There was extreme sense of panic you have experienced, but finally, you are able to sail and come to the banks. That is the time, when you realize; I could have even died, thank God; means, you think of the worst and therefore, you are happy; it could have been even worse, I came only up to this point, thank God; that is the positive way contra factual thought and the negative, of course. If the boat man would not have done this, then this could not have happened. If I would not have taken this boat, then that would not happen, like this. Seeking support from others, where others provide emotional support to you, and utilizing social comparisons; this has also been considered to facilitate your emotion focus, probably. Folkman and Lazars propose that entire coping can be bifurcated in terms of these two approaches that you have; problem focused coping and emotion focused coping.

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Approaches to Coping

- **Cognitive coping:**
 - Conscious mental process for handling negative life events
 - Reappraisal
 - Refocus on planning
- **Proactive coping:**
 - Autonomous goal setting with self-regulatory goal attainment
 - Recognition of cues to reduce or modify stressful life events
 - Anticipatory preparedness is present in proactive coping

Now, we have core lot of coping strategies, which has been located. In fact, now we have the self evaluation sessions where, I will also ask you to participate in questionnaire type of the thing where, you would have seven different types of coping strategies. The prominent coping strategy that now, we could talk about is cognitive coping, which involves a conscious mental process of handling negative life events; reappraisal; refocus on planning; are some of the components of coping strategy.

So, what you do is let, you have looked at things from one way, you revisited. So, you go for rephension, or you plan something and refocus on your plan; executed half way, you again, evaluate your plan. So, there is an argument that if you adopt strategies like this, this also facilitates your coping, but this is more of a cognitive process, that will work in the coping mechanism, and therefore, it is called as cognitive coping. The last and very interesting coping strategy, what is called as proactive coping. It is basically, a combination of autonomous goal setting with self-regulatory goal attainment, and it emphasizes on recognition of cues to reduce modify stressful life.

Basically, what it says is, because it is proactive, therefore you have to anticipate some forth coming event and there is, of course, preparedness for it. So, you show certain degree of anticipatory preparedness for the forth coming event, and that is proactive coping. Basically, what it means is that there are certain types of life events, which has probably, certain degree of predictability. Say three cases of (()) for example, and I

know that I could not get the chance to read during this time, because I would be leasing x y z type of activities for these details. Then, there is a quiz announced on next Monday. So, you will have to know somewhere, make anticipation, that in case, if the quiz is held on Monday, then how do I distribute my time; how do I plan the whole time so that, I do not compromise, neither in terms of participating in (()) nor in terms of getting a good scope. That is cognitive coping; you have a plan at hand; you revisit your plan half way; you refocused on your plan; that is cognitive coping. But imagine situations where, it is the situation that you are contemplating, is not going to come up in the immediate future, but it might come in the long way.

For example, somebody tells you, that when you speak, you stupid your words, but all your words make very little meaning, and by that time, you will come to a certain level in your BTech program, you will have to face different companies during your SPU activities. Because, I know of this, that at one day, this will come therefore, I start preparing myself well in advance. I develop software skills in me; I refine the software skill in me, now, this type of coping is primarily proactive coping, where there is an anticipatory preparedness; this might happen; one day this situation might come; and hence, I plan for it before that.

So, that was all about coping. During this module, what we have discussed is right from the stress to burn out, posttraumatic stress, posttraumatic growth, resilience and coping. So, whole lot many things, we have discussed. Usually, traditionally, if you look at how these things are thought to the university students, usually, these would be broken into pieces. So, coping would be an independent topic; resilience would be an independent topic; stress would be an independent; posttraumatic stress would be an independent; because we have one semester and we are zipping everything together. Therefore, all these were put together. So, it was all about this module. Next, when we meet, we would be starting a new module where, our focus would be on (()). Once we complete that, we will be moving to psychological disorders.