



# Lecture 11

## The Role of Religion in Coping

Rev. Dr Sahaya G. Selvam, sdb



Institute of Youth Studies  
Tangaza University College, Nairobi



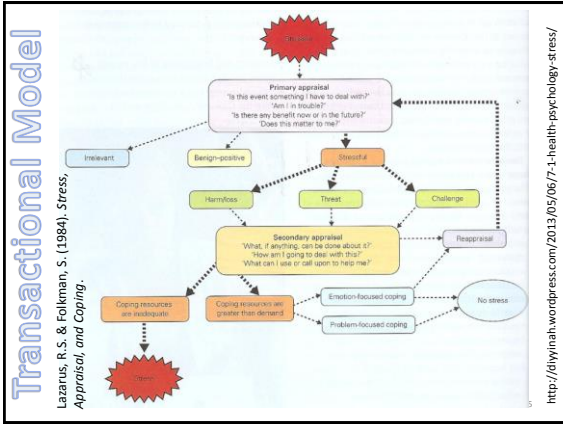
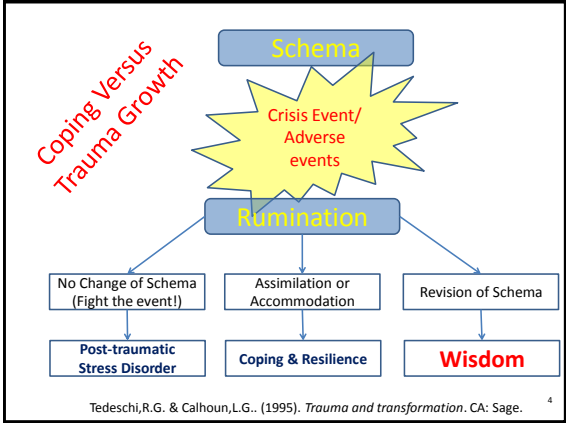
## What is Coping?

- Coping is a conscious effort to resolve a stress or a difficulty of intrapersonal or interpersonal nature, in order to manage or minimise stress or conflict.
- When the effort to cope up is unconscious it could turn out to be a **defence mechanism!**
- Even conscious coping could be **functional/adaptive or dysfunctional/maladaptive.**

## Basic Types of Coping Strategies

1. **Appraisal-focused:** Directed towards challenging one's own assumptions; it could be adaptive but cognitive-based (Eg. Denial or Reframing)
2. **Problem-focused:** Directed towards reducing or eliminating a stressor, could be adaptive but behavioral-based (eg. Prevention/moving away from the stressor; or learning new skills)
3. **Emotion-focused:** Directed towards changing one's own emotional reaction (eg. Distracting oneself, or systematically relaxing).
4. **Meaning-Focused:** aimed at deriving meaning from stressful experience (eg. What can I learn from this)

Lazarus, R.S. & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, Appraisal, and Coping*.  
Weiten, W. & Lloyd, M.A. (2008) *Psychology Applied to Modern Life*.

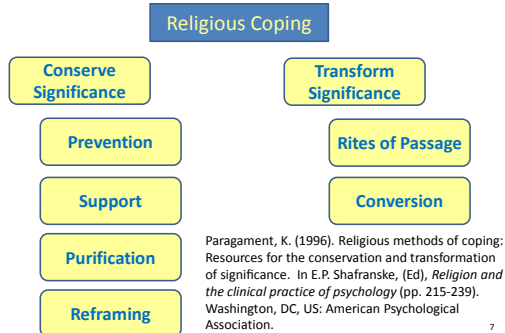


## Some Styles of Coping

### Operationalising the Basic Strategies

- Cope Inventory (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989) has 15 conceptually distinct sub-scales/ dimensions of coping based on Folkman and Lazarus (1984), which include: active coping, planning, positive reframing, acceptance, humour, religion, using emotional support, using instrumental support, self-distraction, denial, venting, substance use, behavioural disengagement, and self-blame.
- Obviously some styles are adaptive others maladaptive.

## Pargament's Religious Coping



## Pargament's Religious Coping

### Summary Points:

- Seeking meaning (significance) is an important dimension of life, related to wellbeing. Events and situations that threaten meaning cause stress.
- Coping is a successful way of dealing with stress.
- This is achieved either through conservation of significance or transformation of it.
- Religion plays an important role in this.

## Pargament's Religious Coping

- **Prevention:** Religious systems through its taboos prevent adverse situations;
- **Support:** Through God or community religion provides support from unpreventable adverse situations;
- **Purification:** Religious traditions provide mechanisms to purify themselves and re-establish wellbeing;
- **Reframing:** Providing another interpretation to sustain significance (eg. May be God is preventing me from some greater disaster...)
- **Rites of Passage:** Religions prepare adherents to face crisis through rites of passage (eg. Transitions, death);
- **Conversion:** Crisis situations may contribute to deeper conviction.

## Positive Methods of Religious Coping As measured by RCOPE

Pargament, K. I., Koenig, H. G., & Perez, L. M. (2000). The many methods of religious coping: Development and initial validation of the RCOPE. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 56*(4), 519-543.

**Spiritual Connection:** Seeking a sense of connectedness with transcendent forces

**Seeking Spiritual Support:** Searching for comfort and reassurance through God's love and care.

**Religious Forgiving:** Looking to religion for help in letting go of anger, hurt, and fear associated with an offence.

**Collaborative Religious Coping:** Seeking control through a partnership with God in problem solving.

## Positive Methods of Religious Coping As measured by RCOPE

Pargament, K. I., Koenig, H. G., & Perez, L. M. (2000). The many methods of religious coping: Development and initial validation of the RCOPE. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 56*(4), 519-543.

**Benevolent Religious Reappraisal:** Redefining the stressor through religion as benevolent and potentially beneficial.

**Religious purification:** Searching for spiritual cleansing through religious actions.

**Religious Focus:** Seeking relief from the stressor through a focus on religion.

## Maladaptive Methods of Religious Coping as measured by RCOPE

Pargament, K. I., Koenig, H. G., & Perez, L. M. (2000). The many methods of religious coping: Development and initial validation of the RCOPE. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 56*(4), 519-543.

**Spiritual Discontent:** Expression of confusion and dissatisfaction with God.

**Punishing God Reappraisal:** Redefining the stressor as a punishment from God for the individual's sins.

**Interpersonal Religious Discontent:** Expressions of confusion and dissatisfaction with clergy and members.

**Demonic Reappraisal:** Redefining the stressor as the act of the Devil.

**Reappraisal of God's Powers:** Redefining God's powers to influence the stressful situation.