



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.

Another area that can play a role 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.

We all experience stressful life situations or struggle with depression, anxiety and stress. The good news is that 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.

If you are experiencing difficulty coping, take active steps to change the way you think and enhance your ability to cope with stressful life events. If you need some further support to make some changes, contact the WWP team to book your appointment with your EAP psychologist today.