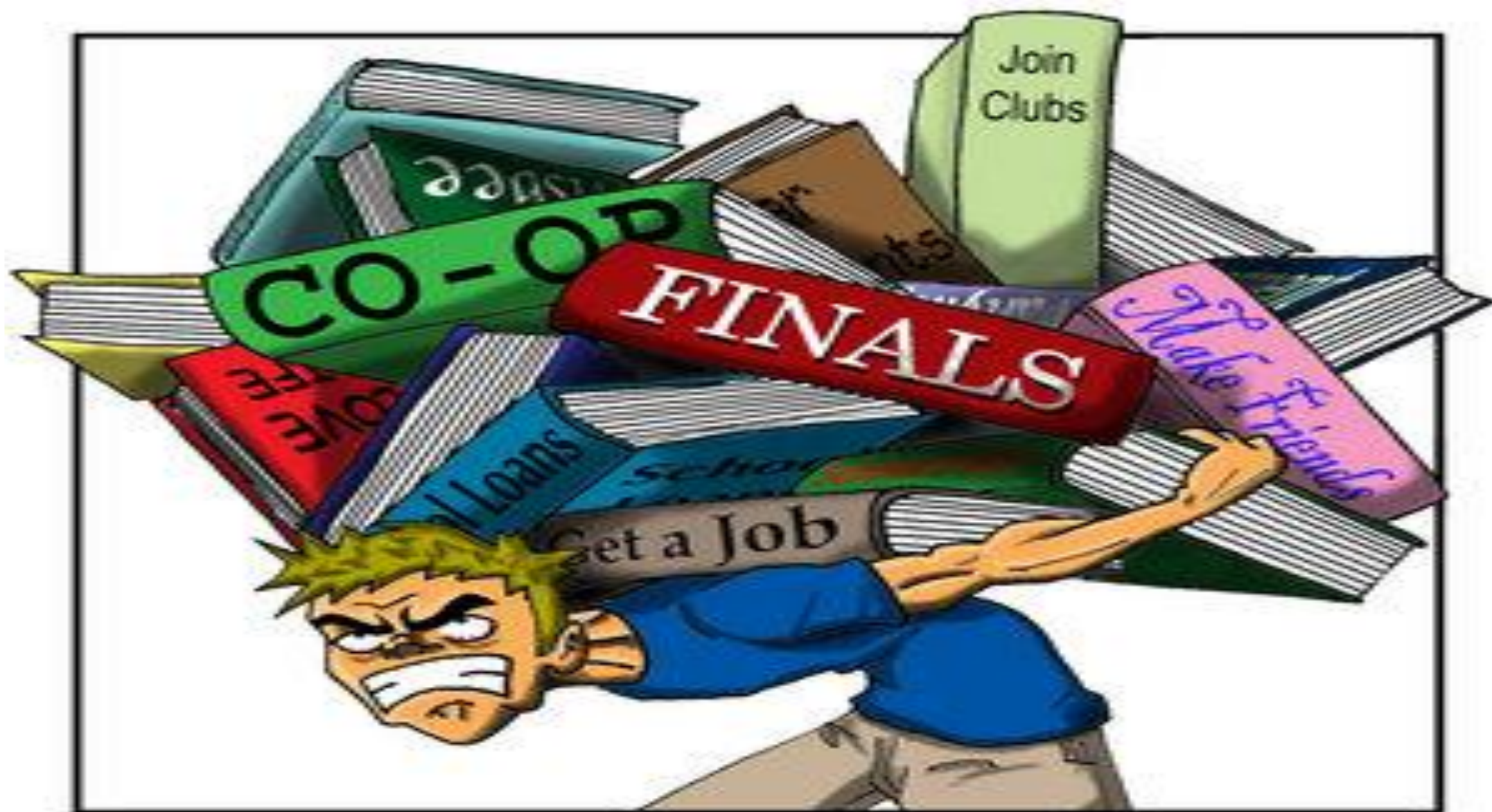


# Stress









STRESSED  
STUDENT



**Adjustment**

# Adjustment

Refers to the psychological processes through which people manage or cope with the demands and challenges of everyday life

Witen & Lloyd, 2005

- ❑ Adjustment and Adaptation

- ❑ Adjustment: Internal and External Demands

# THE PROCESS OF ADJUSTMENT





# Stress could be

- ✓ an individual's response to any challenging, frightening, or difficult situation
- ✓ an individual's response or reaction to a real or imagined threat, event or change
- ✓ a stimulus , response or an interaction between an organism and its environment
- ✓ be embedded in the environment
- ✓ be self created or self imposed

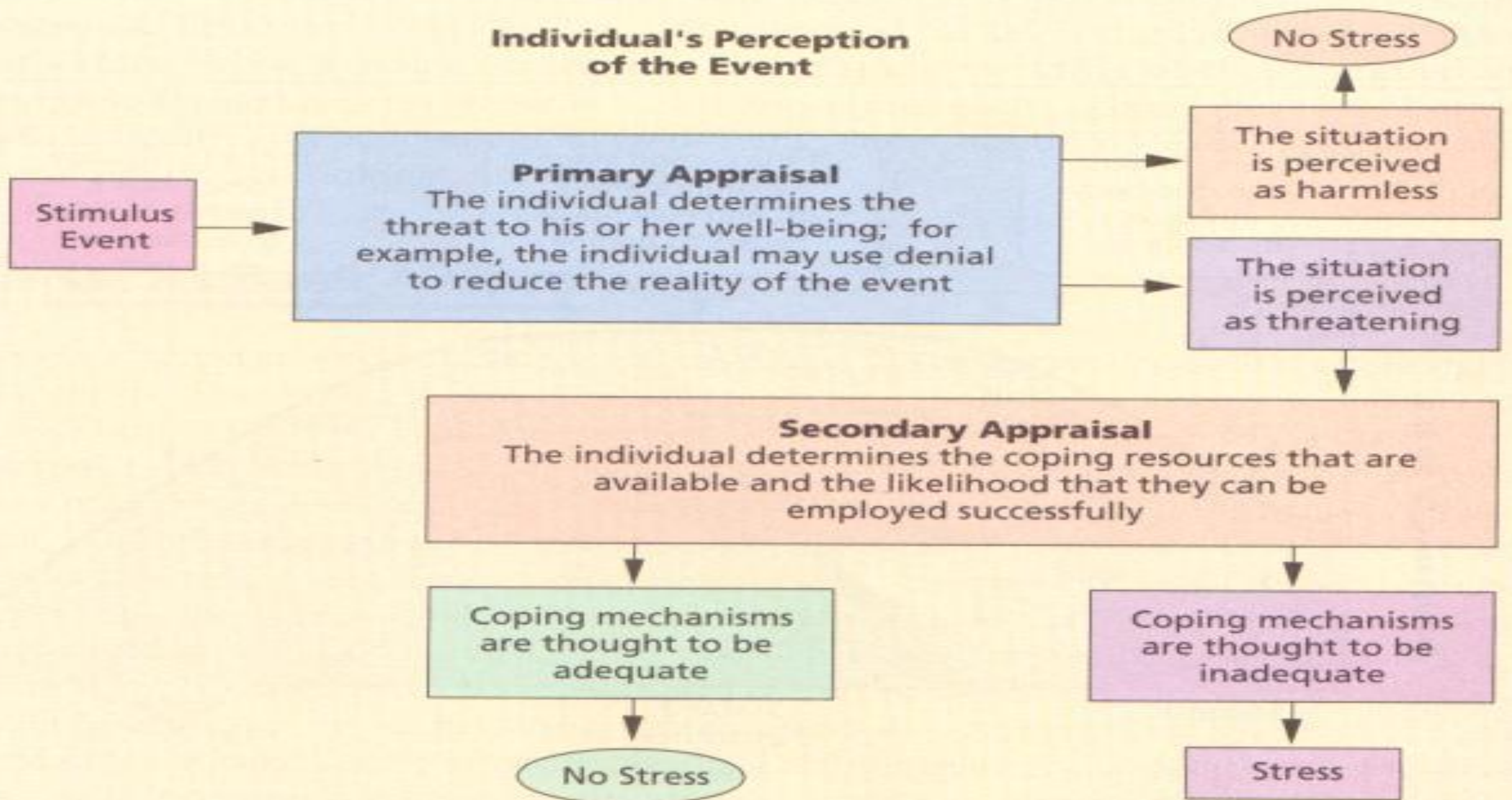
# Stress

It is a condition or feeling experienced when a person perceives that “demands exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize.”

## ✓ Subjective Perception: Stress Lies in the eyes of beholder

□ Lazarus and Folkman (1984: Appraisal of Stress)

- Primary Appraisal: Refers to evaluation whether an event is irrelevant, relevant but not stressful or stressful
- Secondary Appraisal: When an event is perceived as stressful it forces an individual to evaluate his/ her available coping resources to deal with the stress

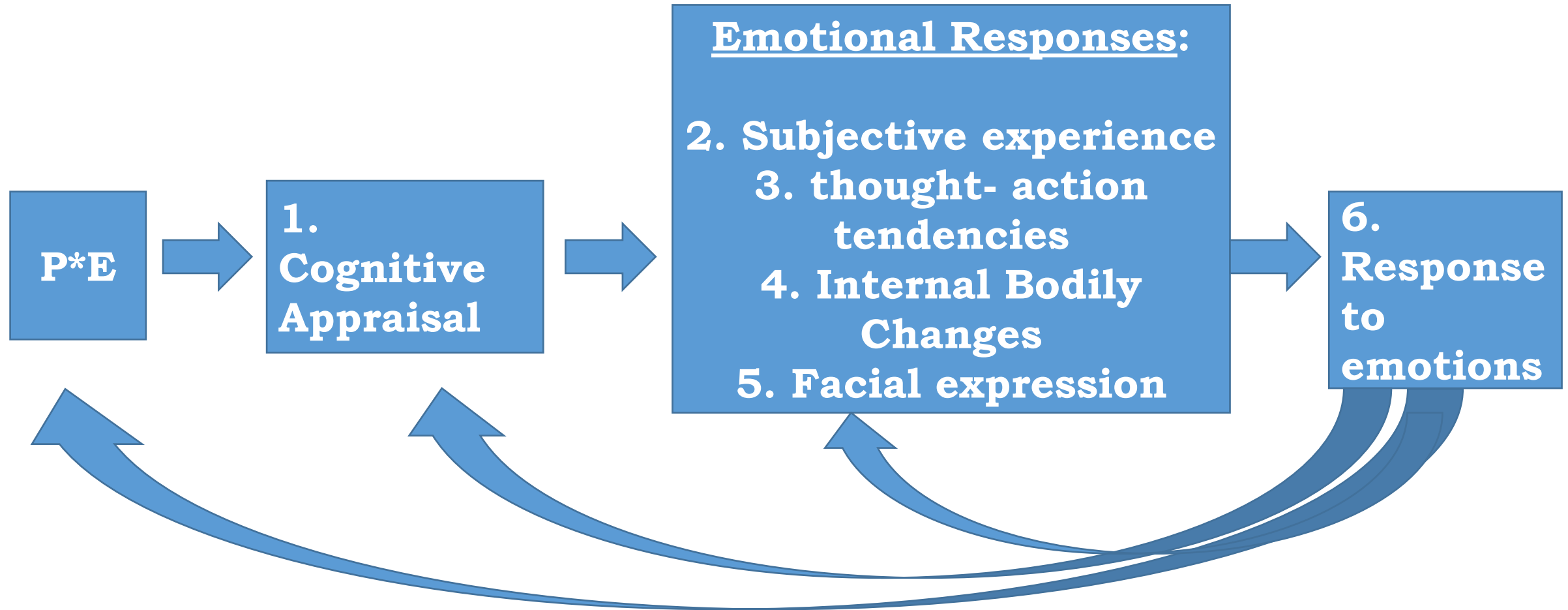


- Secondary appraisals (SA) involve those feelings related to dealing with the stressor.
- **Examples of Positive SA:**
  - *“I can do it if I do my best”,*
  - *“I will try whether my chances of success are high or not”*
  - *“If this way fails, I can always try another method”*
- **Examples of Negative SA:**
  - *“I can’t do it; I know I will fail”*
  - *“I will not do it because no one believes I can”*
  - *“I won’t try because my chances are low”*



- "In the stage of primary appraisal, an individual tends to ask questions: "*What does this stressor and/ or situation mean?*", and, "*How can it influence me?*" The three typical answers to these questions are:
  - "*this is not important*"
  - "*this is good*"
  - "*this is stressful*"
- At this stage one tends to classify whether the stressor or the situation is a *threat, a challenge or a harm-loss*..

# Process of Emotions



If people could be induced to be in a general state of autonomic arousal, the quality of their Emotion would be determined solely by their appraisal of the situation

- ✓ Stressors: Any threat, event or change
  - Stressors can be internal (thoughts, beliefs, attitudes or external (loss, tragedy, change)
  
- ✓ Hans Selye (1956)
  - ✓ “Stress is not necessarily something bad – it all depends on how you take it.”

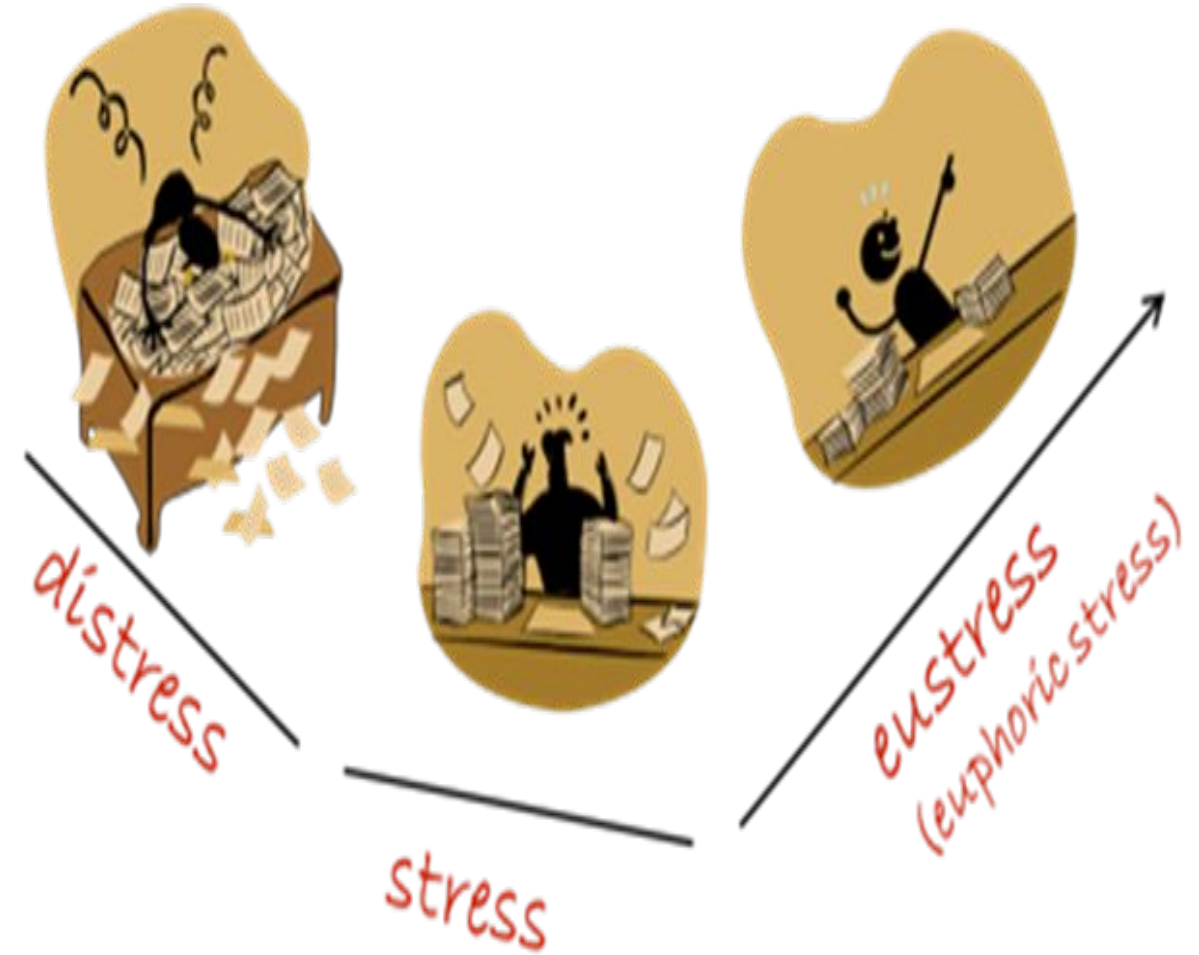
# Stress: Two Aspects

## ➤ Positive Aspect: Eustress

- Outcome of Eustress
  - Enables concentration
  - Increases performance
  - Energizes you into motion

## ➤ Negative Aspect: Distress

- Outcome of distress
  - Causes anxiety or concern
  - Loss of motivation
  - Reduces effectiveness
  - Physical, mental, and behavioral problems
  - Can lead to mental and physical problems

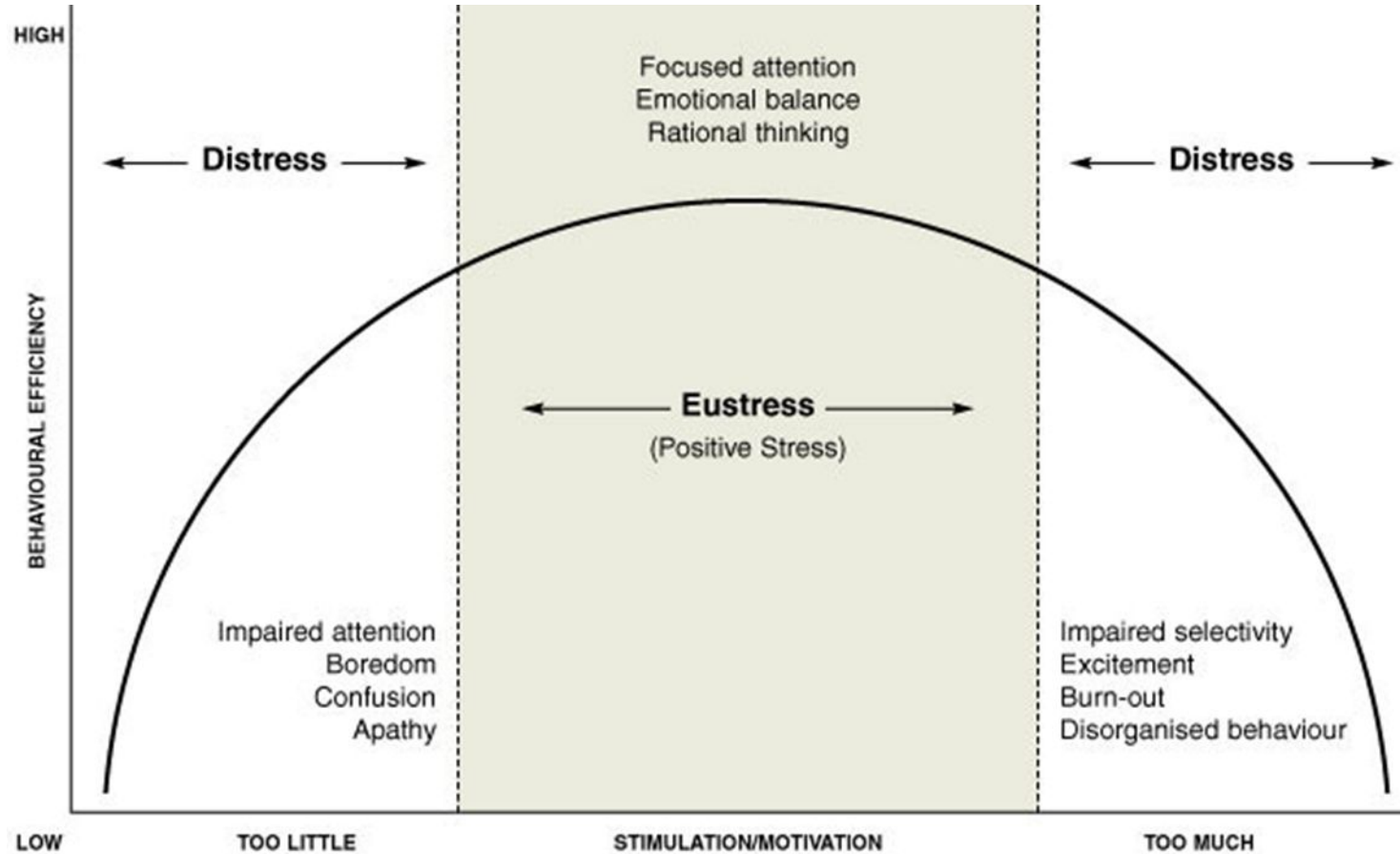


# Top stressors among college students

- Relationships
- Time Management
- Finals and Midterms
- Roommates
- Finances
- Addictions
- Family Needs
- Lack of Resources
- Difficulty Prioritizing
- Illness
- Social pressures and expectations
- Environmental and cultural changes
- Loss: Literal loss & Loss of comfort



# Stress and Performance



# Stress and Culture

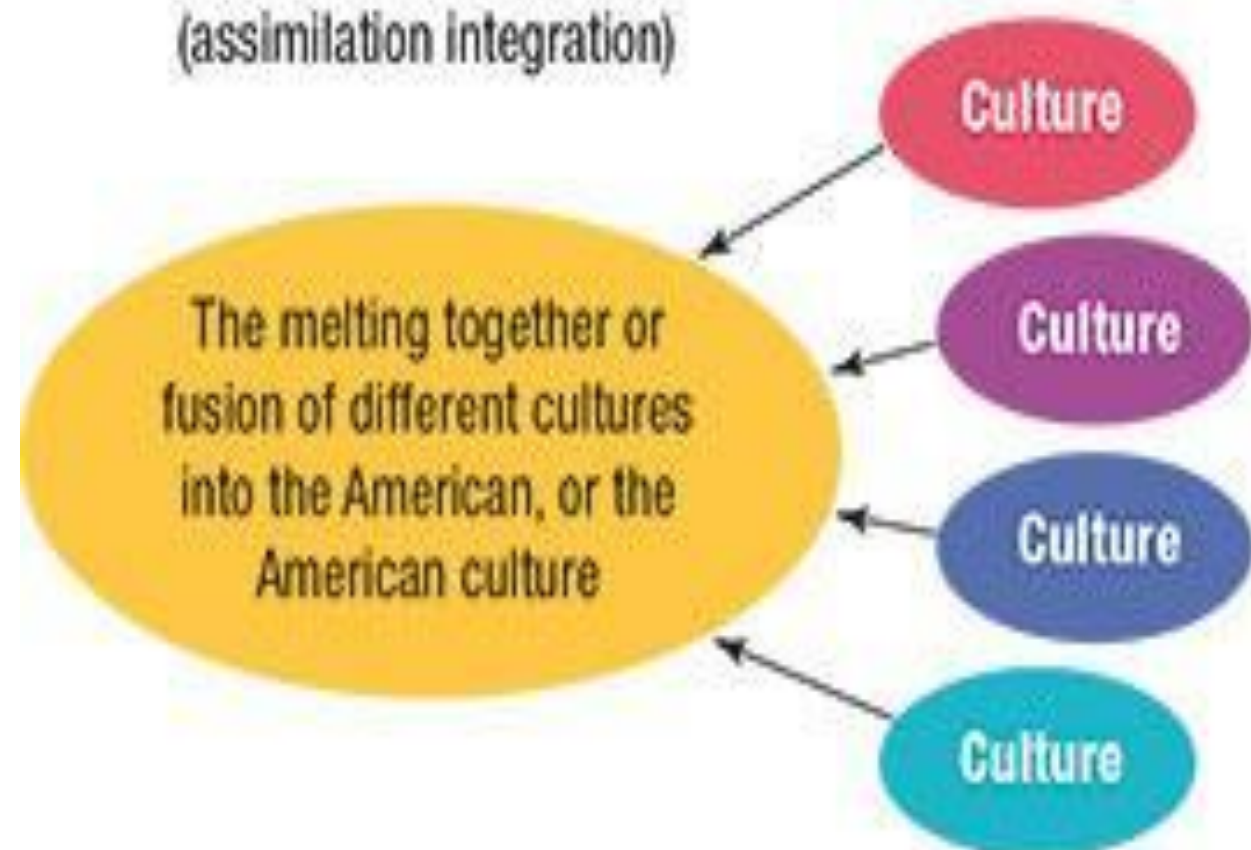
## □ Adjustment to a New Culture



Salad Bowl vs. Melting Pot

### **Melting Pot**

(assimilation integration)



### **Salad Bowl**

(pluralistic integration)



forlaget © columbus

- ❑ Acculturation: The process of becoming communicatively competent in a culture we have not been raised in.
- ❑ Assimilation: The process of two different things coming together to blend and, in some cases, create a new thing all together.
- ❑ Assimilation is a process whereby people of a culture learn to adapt to the ways of the majority culture.
- ❑ Threat to loss of one's own culture

Both models of multicultural societies have contradictory aspects:

- in a melting pot there is no cultural diversity and sometimes differences are not respected;
- in a salad bowl cultures do not mix at all.

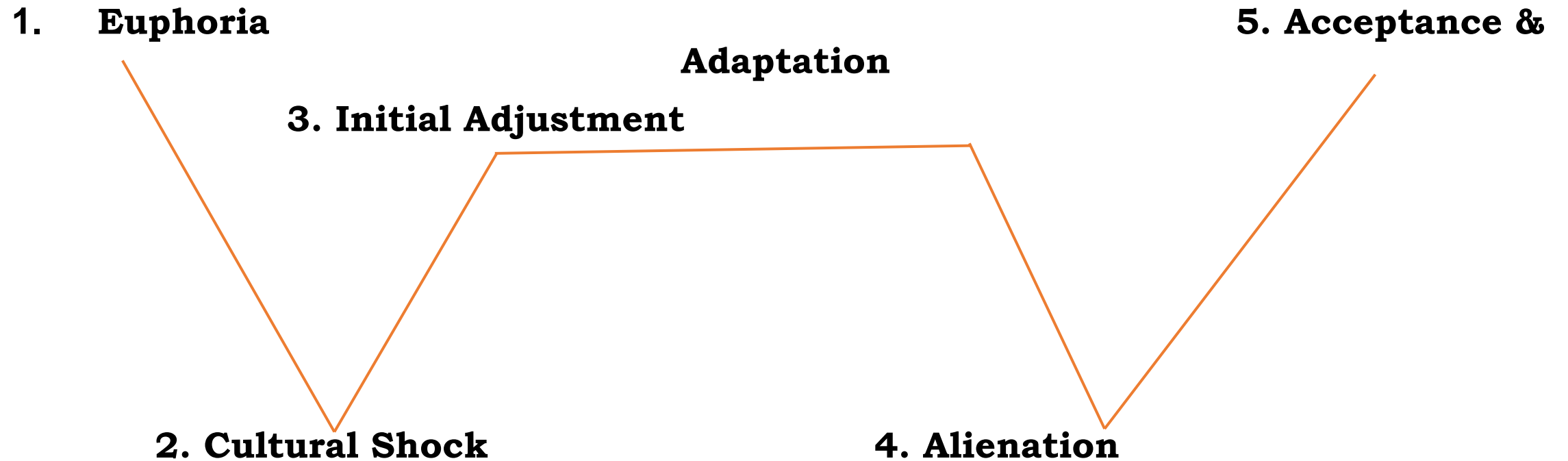
***So which model is better?***

The ideal situation would be a society where all citizens have equal rights and opportunities, but can also maintain their own individuality.

It is not easy to put this ideal into practice, but multiracial society is now a reality and we must learn to live together in the best possible way.



# Acculturation process



# Major Types of Stress

- **Frustration**
- **Conflict**
- **Pressure**
- **Change**

# Impact of Stress

- Health
- Burnout
- PTSD

# STRESS OR BURN OUT?

## **Stress**

- Over-engagement
- Emotions are over-reactive
- Urgency and hyperactivity
- Loss of energy
- Leads to anxiety disorders
- Primary damage is physical
- May kill you prematurely

## **Burnout**

- Disengagement
- Emotions are blunted
- Helplessness and hopelessness
- Loss of motivation, ideals, and hope
- Leads to detachment and depression
- Primary damage is emotional
- May make life seem not worth living

# Factors Influencing Stress Tolerance

- Predictability:** being able to predict the occurrence of a stressful event-even if the individual cannot control it usually reduces the severity of stress.
- Control over Duration:** Having control over the duration of a stressful event reduces the severity of the stress.
- Cognitive Evaluation:** The severity of any stressful event also depends on how person perceives and appraise it.
- Social Support:** The emotional support and concern of other people can make stress more bearable.





# Hey, are you feeling stressed?

Faced with many challenges in life? You can learn to tackle them.

I can't finish my revision, I'm so stressed!



## Tackling Exam Stress

- Start revision early.
- Stick to a revision timetable.
- Set realistic targets.
- Seek help when in doubt.
- Be prepared.

I just can't face my problems.



## Staying Positive

- Believe that you can face any challenge.
- See the positive side of any situation.
- Mistakes are not failures. Learn from them.
- Be strong.

I'm really angry!



## Managing Anger

- Do not use hurtful words. Walk away.
- Take a few deep breaths.
- Think through the problem and resolve it calmly.
- Stay cool.

I need a break!



## De-stressing and Relaxing

- Talk to your family, teacher or friend.
- Exercise or play a sport with your friends.
- Go for a movie or read your favourite novel.
- Be happy.

## HAVE YOU TRIED ANY OF THESE TIPS?

Share these tips with your friends and help them cope with their challenges too!

To find out more about managing your mental wellness, visit [www.hpb.gov.sg](http://www.hpb.gov.sg) or call HealthLine at 1800 2231313.

## **Suggestions for reducing stress levels and enhancing your college Experience**

- Keep your space and consequently your mind organized.
- Go to class
- Keep up with course work (the rule of thumb is two hours of study per one hour in class).
- Get involved with campus activities.
- Maintain communication with your family.
- Take advantage of campus resources and choose a career path.
- Form healthy relationships.
- Talk to someone about your problems (family member, friend, college counselor or any trusted person).
- Get to know your professors.

**Answer the following questions by using following scale:**

**1= Rarely, 2= Occasionally, 3= Frequently, 4= Often, 5 = Always**

1. \_\_\_How often do you find that you stay online longer than you intended?
2. \_\_\_How often do you neglect household chores to spend more time online?
3. \_\_\_How often do you prefer the excitement of the Internet to intimacy with your partner?
4. \_\_\_How often do you form new relationships with fellow online users?
5. \_\_\_How often do others in your life complain to you about the amount of time you spend online?



6. How often do your grades or school work suffer because of the amount of time you spend online?

7. How often do you check your e-mail before something else that you need to do?

8. How often does your job performance or productivity suffer because of the Internet?

9. How often do you become defensive or secretive when anyone asks you what you do online?

10. How often do you block out disturbing thoughts about your life with soothing thoughts of the Internet?

11. How often do you find yourself anticipating when you will go online again?

12. How often do you fear that life without the Internet would be boring, empty, and joyless?

13. How often do you snap, yell, or act annoyed if someone bothers you while you are online?

14. How often do you lose sleep due to late-night log-ins?

15. How often do you feel preoccupied with the Internet when off-line, or fantasize about being online?

16. How often do you find yourself saying “just a few more minutes” when online?

17. How often do you try to cut down the amount of time you spend online and fail?



18. How often do you try to hide how long you've been online?

19. How often do you choose to spend more time online over going out with others?

20. How often do you feel depressed, moody, or nervous when you are off-line, which goes away once you are back online?

# Scoring: Internet Addiction

- **NONE 0 – 30 points**
- **MILD 20- 39 points:** You are an average online user. You may surf the Web a bit too long at times, but you have control over your usage.
- **MODERATE 40 -69 points:** You are experiencing occasional or frequent problems because of the Internet. You should consider their full impact on your life.
- **SEVERE 70 – 100 points:** Your Internet usage is causing significant problems in your life. You should evaluate the impact of the Internet on your life and address the problems directly caused by your Internet usage.

# Coping

# Cope

- (Of a person) deal effectively with something difficult

# *Coping*

- “Efforts to master, reduce, or tolerate the demands created by stress”
- General points for consideration:
  1. People cope with stress in many ways.
  2. It is most adaptive to use a variety of coping strategies.
  3. Coping strategies vary in their adaptive value.

# *Common Coping Patterns*

## **Giving up**

- People may develop ***learned helplessness*** – “passive behavior produced by exposure to unavoidable aversive events”.
- Sometimes, could then be transferred to situations in which the person is ***not really helpless***.
- This then creates a passive reaction to stressful events, rather than ***active problem-solving***.

# A Small Story

- *“The very thought “Nothing I do matters” prevents us from acting.”*
- Two fish were put into the same tank. One was big, and one small. The species of the small fish was one of the favorite foods of the big fish. The big fish took off after the little fish, but a pane of glass separated them, so the big fish smashed his face...over and over again. Finally, big fish gave up. Then the experimenters removed the pane of glass, but the big fish never again tried to eat the little fish. Sometimes the two fish would swim right past each other, sometimes they would even brush up against each other, but the big fish never made another attempt.
- Apparently, big fish was convinced he/ she couldn't do it, no matter how hard he tried.



- Morale of the story:

- we can assume our helplessness is permanent, even when it isn't. If we make that assumption, we just give up. We feel hopeless and have no energy, because we believe all our efforts are in vain

## *Giving up, continued*

- **Cognitive interpretation** of aversive events may determine whether we feel helpless or not.
  - People with a **pessimistic explanatory style** view aversive events as “out of their control”, feel helpless, and give up.
- In general, it has been found that **optimists** (people who have general expectancies of good outcomes) seem to be much more stress resistant than pessimists (people who have general expectancies for poor outcome).
- **Hardiness** is another characteristic that save an individual from harmful effect of stress. Hardy persons show three characteristics
  - Exhibit higher levels of commitment
  - They tend to perceive change as a challenge
  - They have high sense of personal control over events.

## 2. Acting aggressively

- Frustration caused by stressful events may elicit **aggression**, “behavior intended to hurt someone, either physically or verbally”.
- People often act out toward others who had nothing to do with their frustration.
- Using a substitute target in this manner was called **displacement** by Freud.

- Freud believed aggressive acts could release pent-up emotional tension and called the process ***catharsis***.
- However, research finds that acting aggressively produces *more*, not less, anger and aggression.

### 3. Indulging yourself

- When stressed by events that are going poorly, some people seek out alternative sources of satisfaction:
  - Excessive eating, drinking, and smoking;
  - gambling & drug use; **and**
  - ***Internet addiction*** – “spending an inordinate amount of time on the Internet and inability to control online use”

#### 4. **Blaming yourself**

- People often become highly critical of themselves when stressed.
- Albert Ellis called this ***catastrophic thinking***, which involves
  - Attributing failures to personal shortcomings;
  - Focusing on negative feedback; **and**
  - Being overly pessimistic about the future.
- This pattern perpetuates negative emotional reactions to stress.

## 5. Using defensive coping

- ***Defense mechanisms*** are “largely unconscious reactions that protect a person from unpleasant emotions such as anxiety and guilt”.
- Defense mechanisms shield us from emotional discomfort caused by stress.
- However, most involve a degree of ***self-deception***, a distortion of reality.



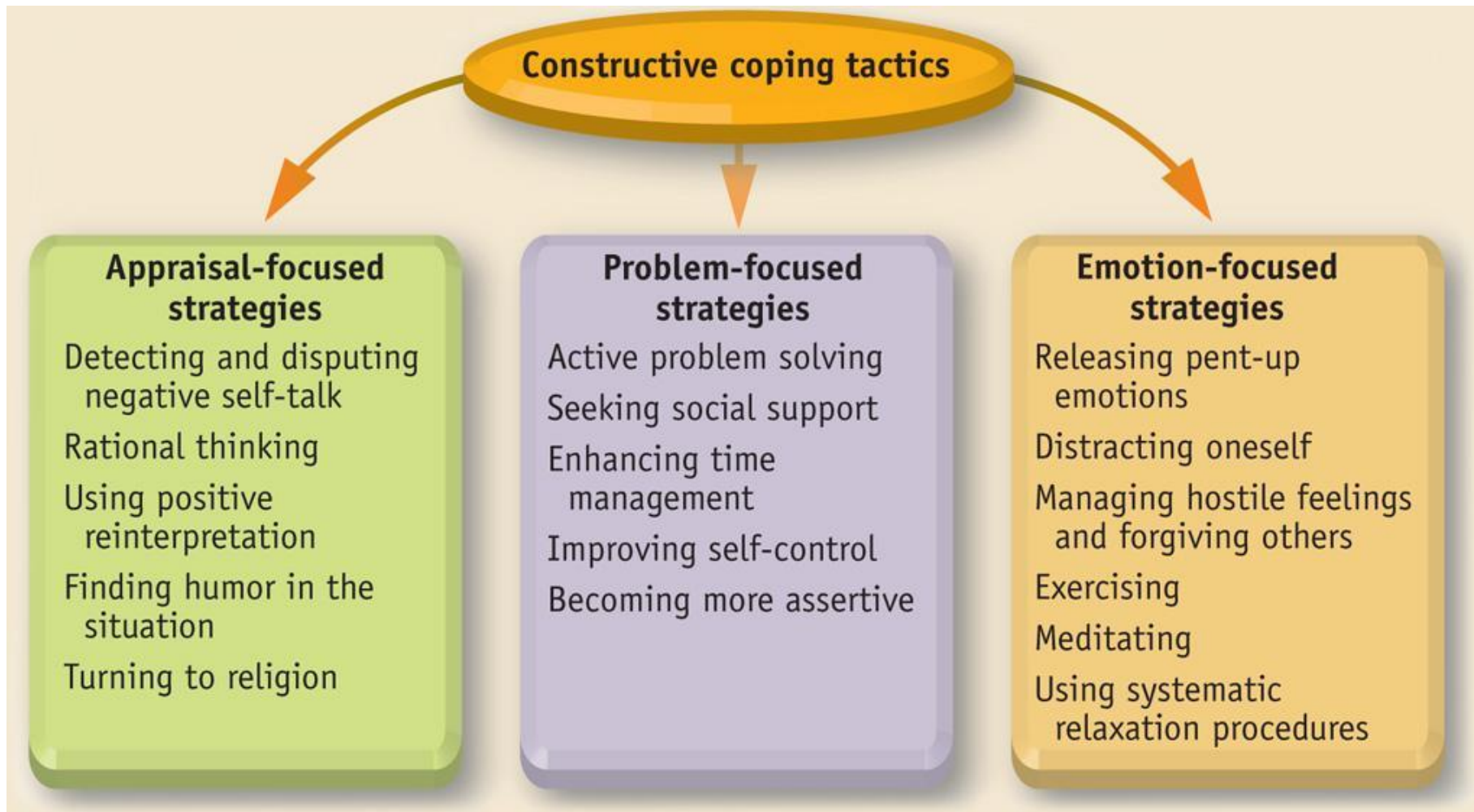
- Defense mechanisms are considered normal, and can operate at various levels of consciousness.
- Can they ever be healthy?
  - Generally, they are not, because
    - They are **avoidance strategies**;
    - They often involve “wishful thinking”; **and**
    - Some have been linked to poor health.

## *Are they healthy?, continued*

- Sometimes, however, they are useful for *severe* stress because they buffer us from extremely negative emotions.
  - (e.g., unrealistic optimism may benefit a terminally ill patient.)

There are three main categories of **constructive** coping strategies:

1. Appraisal-focused
2. Problem-focused
3. Emotion-focused



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**Figure 4.6. Overview of constructive coping tactics.** Coping tactics can be organized in several ways, but we will use the classification scheme shown here, which consists of three categories: appraisal-focused, problem-focused, and emotion-focused strategies. The list of coping tactics in each category is not exhaustive. We will discuss most, but not all, of the listed strategies in our coverage of constructive coping.

# Appraisal-Focused Coping

- Our *appraisal* (or beliefs about stressful events) is critical to the coping process.
  - **Negative appraisals** (or beliefs) are often associated with catastrophic thinking, which exaggerates the magnitude of our problems.
  - **Positive** (realistic and/or optimistic) appraisals allow constructive coping.

- Positive reinterpretation can also buffer stress in the following ways:
  - We can recognize that “things could be worse”.
  - We can utilize “benefit finding” in a bad situation (searching for something good in a bad experience).

## **Problem-Focused Coping**

- **Using systematic problem-solving**
- Evidence shows that problem-solving skills can be increased through training (Heppner & Lee, 2002, 2005) and by using these steps:
  1. Clarify the problem.
  2. Generate alternative courses of action.
  3. Evaluation alternatives and select a course of action.
  4. Take action while maintaining flexibility.



- **Seeking help**

- It is often helpful to seek aid from friends, family, coworkers, and neighbors.
- Cultural factors in seeking help:
  - Asians, Asian Americans, and individuals from collectivistic cultures are less likely to seek help from others.
  - This is based in a cultural tendency to avoid “burdening” others with one’s problems.

- **Using time more effectively: Time Management**
  - A common source of stress is feeling there is not enough time to accomplish tasks.
  - Often, this can be improved by using the time we have more effectively.

## *Using time more effectively, continued*

- **The causes of wasted time**

1. Inability to set or stick to priorities.
2. Inability to say “no” to others’ demands on our time.
3. Inability to delegate responsibility.
4. Inability to throw things away.
5. Inability to accept anything less than perfection.

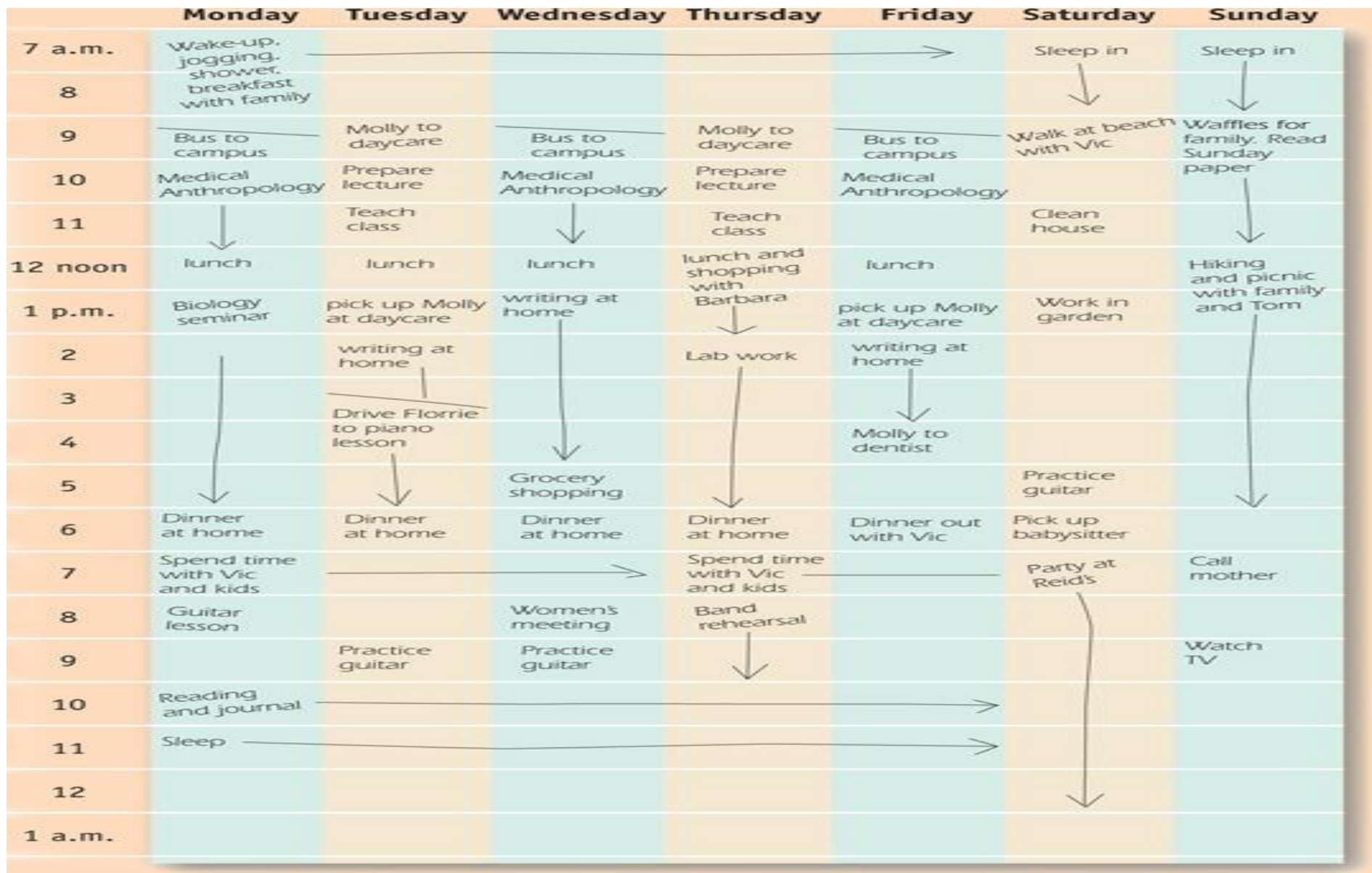
*Using time more effectively, continued*

- **The problem of procrastination**
  - About 70-90% of college students put off academic assignments (Knaus, 2000).
  - Many claim to benefit from this tactic (e.g., saying they “work well under pressure”).

- **Why do students procrastinate?**
  - Desire to minimize time on a task.
  - Desire to optimize efficiency.
  - Close proximity to reward.
    - Students often get rewarded for it.
- However, procrastinators also tend to experience more anxiety and health problems.

- **Time management techniques**

1. Monitor your use of time – keep a record to see where it all goes (see Figure 4.11).
2. Clarify your goals – decide what you want to accomplish with your time.
3. Plan your activities using a schedule – planning saves time in the long run.



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**Figure 4.11. Example of a time log.** Experts recommend keeping a detailed record of how you use your time if you are to improve your time management. This example shows the kind of record keeping that should be done.

4. Protect your prime time – announce to others when you’re blocking off certain times to work so you won’t be interrupted.
5. Increase your efficiency. Try these tips:
  - Handle paper once.
  - Tackle one task at a time.
  - Group similar tasks together.
  - Make use of your “downtime”.