

Lazarus and Folkman's **Stress and Coping Theory** (1984) is a foundational psychological model that explains how people experience and manage stress. Here's a clear breakdown:

Core Idea

Stress is not just about external events—it depends on how an individual **appraises** (interprets) and **copes** with those events. The theory emphasizes **cognitive appraisal** and **coping strategies**.

Key Components

1. Cognitive Appraisal

This is the process of evaluating a situation to determine its significance for well-being. It has two main stages:

- **Primary Appraisal**
 - *Question:* “Is this situation a threat, challenge, or irrelevant?”
 - If perceived as a **threat** or **challenge**, stress may occur.
 - **Secondary Appraisal**
 - *Question:* “Do I have the resources to cope?”
 - Involves assessing coping options and control over the situation.
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2. Coping

Coping refers to the cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage stress. Lazarus and Folkman identified two main types:

- **Problem-Focused Coping**
 - Aimed at changing the situation (e.g., seeking solutions, planning).
 - Effective when the stressor is controllable.
 - **Emotion-Focused Coping**
 - Aimed at managing emotional responses (e.g., relaxation, reframing).
 - Useful when the stressor is uncontrollable.
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Transactional Model

The theory is called “transactional” because stress results from the **interaction** between the person and the environment, not just the event itself.

Why It's Important

- Explains individual differences in stress responses.
 - Highlights that coping strategies can reduce stress impact.
 - Forms the basis for stress management interventions.
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