

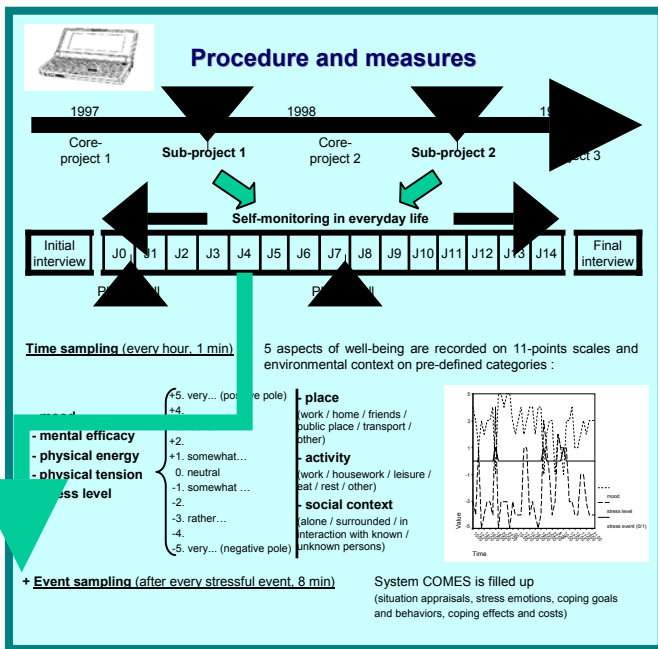
# Studying and enhancing coping of young adults entering the work force

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**Theoretical framework** Based on a Situation-behavior model (Perrez & Reicherts, 1992), stressful situations are characterized by different parameters (controllability, changeability, re-occurrence, negative valence, novelty and transparency, etc.) and coping behaviors by different dimensions (situation-directed, self-directed). **Stress and coping episodes** are conceptualized as the sequence: (1) characteristics of the objective situation -> (2) as perceived by the person -> (3) emotional reactions and (4) the coping goals -> (5) the coping behaviors which affect the (internal and external) situation -> (6) the outcome of the coping efforts is evaluated. The model allows to study the "fit" of coping behaviors with the situation characteristics: **Functional coping** can be analyzed in terms of "rules of adequate coping behaviors".

## Research questions

During transition into work, what are the psychological characteristics of the situations the young adults experience as stressful in their daily life (occupational and private)?  
What are the coping efforts of the job newcomers to deal with the situations? How functional are their coping behaviors with regard to the situations?  
What is the impact of stressful episodes on actual well-being (state indicators) and on more long-term well-being and health?  
Does functional coping attenuates these effects in the short and long term?



## Characteristics and examples of stressful situations for young adults entering the work force

Sources	Task 64.3%	Social 31.5%	Self 4.2%
<b>Occupational 45.5%</b>	35.1% "computer has just erased my work"	9.2% "a client and a colleague went on my nerves"	1.2% "contract for my job might not be extended"
<b>Non-occupational 54.5%</b>	29.2% "driving in a very bad weather"	22.3% "stormy discussion in the family"	3% "I am worried about my debts"

Mean number of stressful events recorded over 2 weeks = 10.2 ± 3.1

### Situation characteristics of occupational and non-occupational situations

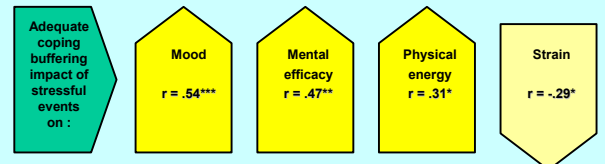
- Occupational stress situations are more controllable, less changeable, more probable to re-occur and of longer duration
- Negative valence (strain), novelty and transparency do not differ
- Most characteristics are similar to student reference sample except higher frequency and negative valence.

## How functional is the coping of job newcomers? What are the effects on well-being and health?

**Rules of adequate coping (RAC)** recommend different coping behaviors (active influence, evasion, re-evaluation, regulation of emotion, etc.) as a function of certain situation characteristics (controllability, negative valence, novelty, re-occurrence, etc.). **Functional coping** consists of achieving a recommended situation-behavior fit. Previous studies gave strong empirical evidence for the positive effects of coping behaviors according to the proposed rules. **RAC examples:**  
(1) "In situations with high controllability and low changeability, you should try to change the situation (high active influence)!"  
(2) "In situations with high negative valence, you should regulate (soothe) your stress emotions!"

**Results:** Adequate coping according to the rules of adequate coping:

- Attenuates short term impact of stressful events on actual well-being: relatively better mood, better mental functioning, higher physical energy and less strain.
- Predicts long term well-being (6 months later, during transition into work): More positive changes (r=.49), better physical well-being (r=.41) and psychological well-being (r=.37)



## Specific deficits in coping of job newcomers

In general, job newcomers of our study engage in rather adequate stress and coping behaviors (compared to other studies). But there seem to be **some specific deficits**: too little emotion regulation, re-evaluation and evasion/avoiding behaviors, in particular in the face of occupational stressful events, which imply high strain, low controllability and high re-occurrence.

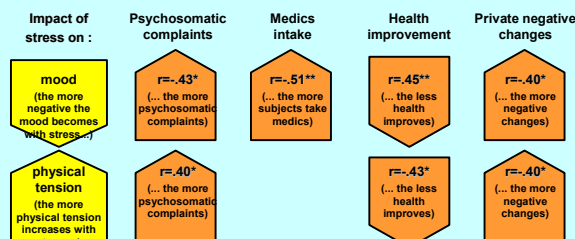
**Based on the approach and the results of this micro-analytic study, practical recommendations and intervention programs specific for job newcomers can be developed.**

## Impact of stressful situations on actual well-being

### - and its reliability (stability between 1st and 2nd week of self-monitoring)



### - and its predictive validity (on health 6 months later)



## References:

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