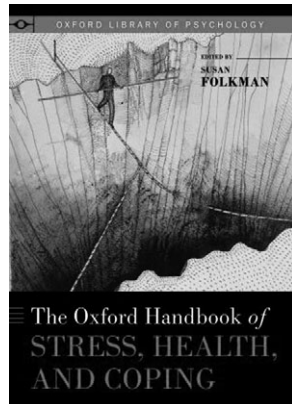


BOOK REVIEWS

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The Oxford Handbook of Stress, Health and Coping

Edited by Susan Folkman. Published by Oxford University Press, New York, 1st edition, 2011. ISBN: 9780195375343. Price: £80. 469 pp.



The Oxford Handbook of Stress, Health and Coping is edited by Susan Folkman, Professor Emeritus at University of California, San Francisco. Professor Folkman is recognized internationally for her work on the dynamic theory of psychological stress and coping. She co-authored the well-known 1984 publication *Stress, Appraisal and Coping* with Professor Richard S. Lazarus. The intended target audience of this book is students, researchers and practitioners across the fields of health psychology, medicine and palliative care.

Extensive research over the last few decades indicates that stress and associated negative emotions have a deleterious effect and are associated with a higher risk of mortality in healthy and chronically ill samples. This book provides a comprehensive review of the evidence of the harmful effect of stress on health and well-being and factors that may alleviate these harmful effects.

The book is organized into eight sections, for example, the 'developmental perspective on stress and coping' and 'coping interventions'. The book is further broken down into 22 topic-based chapters where themes are explored in relation to different health contexts, e.g. chapters include stress, coping and health in HIV/AIDS, bereavement and chronic ill health. Each of these chapters is written by a leading researcher in their field with the introductory and concluding chapters written by Folkman.

The scientific quality of the text is excellent and the text is comprehensive in its overview of the current state

of research in stress coping processes. The book also highlights areas of potential interest for future study.

The subject matter is highly relevant to occupational physicians, however, the text is very technical and there is little reference to the organizational setting with a few exceptions. The chapter on 'resilience' has an interesting narrative on the theory of resilience in organizations, and references research exploring factors that may support organizations to prosper especially during times of change or economic downturn.

I found the chapter reviewing coping interventions most interesting; this explores research on the impact of activities such as yoga and exercise, meditation, 'goal setting' and laughter/humour on positive effect and well-being. Empirical studies are underway looking at the beneficial effects of laughter yoga!

This book is a fascinating if slow read and, in my opinion, represents excellent value for money. However, it probably best serves as a reference book for an individual with particular interest in the subject matter or someone planning some research in the area. For this reason, this book is best borrowed from the library bookshelf.

The Oxford Handbook of Stress, Health and Coping is part of the Oxford Library of Psychology.

Rating

★★ (Reference only)

Jacqueline Thompson