

Coping and wellbeing

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Defining Coping

“any attempt that people make at a cognitive and behavioural level to tolerate, minimize and reduce the negative consequences of a situation” (Lazarus, 1966, p. 66)

“constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and / or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 141)

“a stabilizing factor that can help individuals maintain psychosocial adaptation during stressful periods [...] cognitive and behavioural efforts to reduce or eliminate stressful conditions and associated emotional distress” (Holahan, Moos and Schaefer, 1996, p. 25)

“relatively stable, individual differences in coping with stress ... it is conceptualized as a personality characteristic ... coping style may be defined as a repertoire of strategies available to cope with stressful encounters, specific for an individual” (Heszen-Niejodek, 1997, p. 343)

Dispositional vs Situational approaches

| Situational | Dispositional |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Coping varies by situation | Psychodynamic 'trait' perspective |
| Process-oriented | Stable set of responses used (style) |
| Person variables irrelevant | Low variability |
| High variability | Styles often broad |
| Limited explanatory power | Resistant to intervention? |



MULTIDIMENSIONAL COPING PROFILE

style of response to challenge or adversity, measured across dimensions of coping

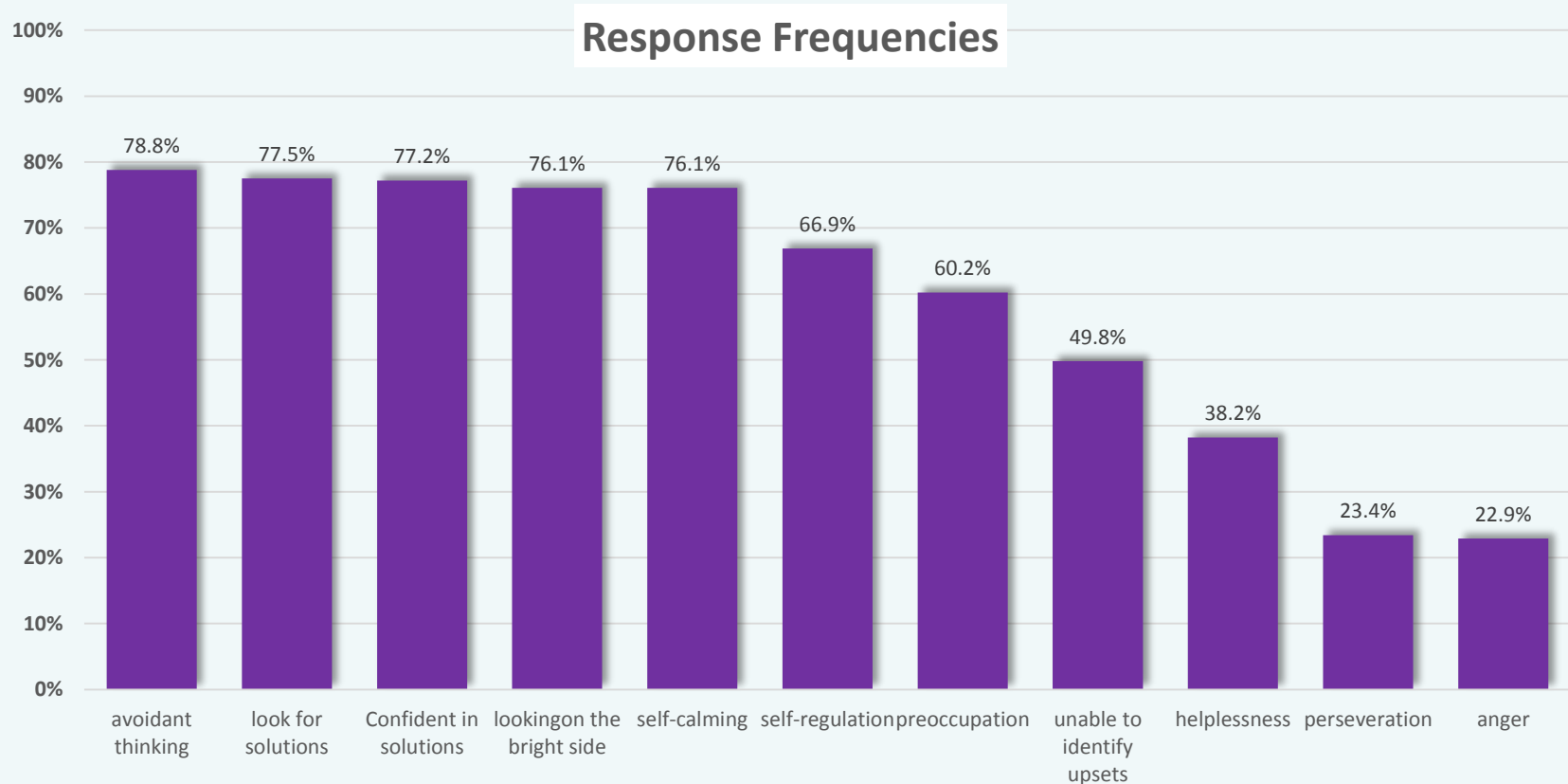
MULTIDIMENSIONAL COPING PROFILE

An individual's style of response **across situations** to challenge or adversity, measured across **multiple dimensions or aspects of coping**

Sample and Methods

- 2566 children
- seven to eleven years (UK key stage 2)
- 15 schools across three different Local Education Authorities (LEAs) in the South East of England
- Paper and pencil surveys in classroom setting
- Coping (*Profile of Coping Dimensions in Children (PCDC; Quay, 2012)*), stressors and symptomatology (*SCAS, Spence, 1998*)

Findings – most common responses



Findings – gender differences

| Girls | Boys |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Avoidant thinking | Looking on the bright side |
| Attempts to generate solutions | 'Can do' confidence |
| Feeling helpless | Managing feelings of upset |
| Preoccupation | |
| Being upset without knowing why | |
| Perseverative responses | |

Findings – age differences

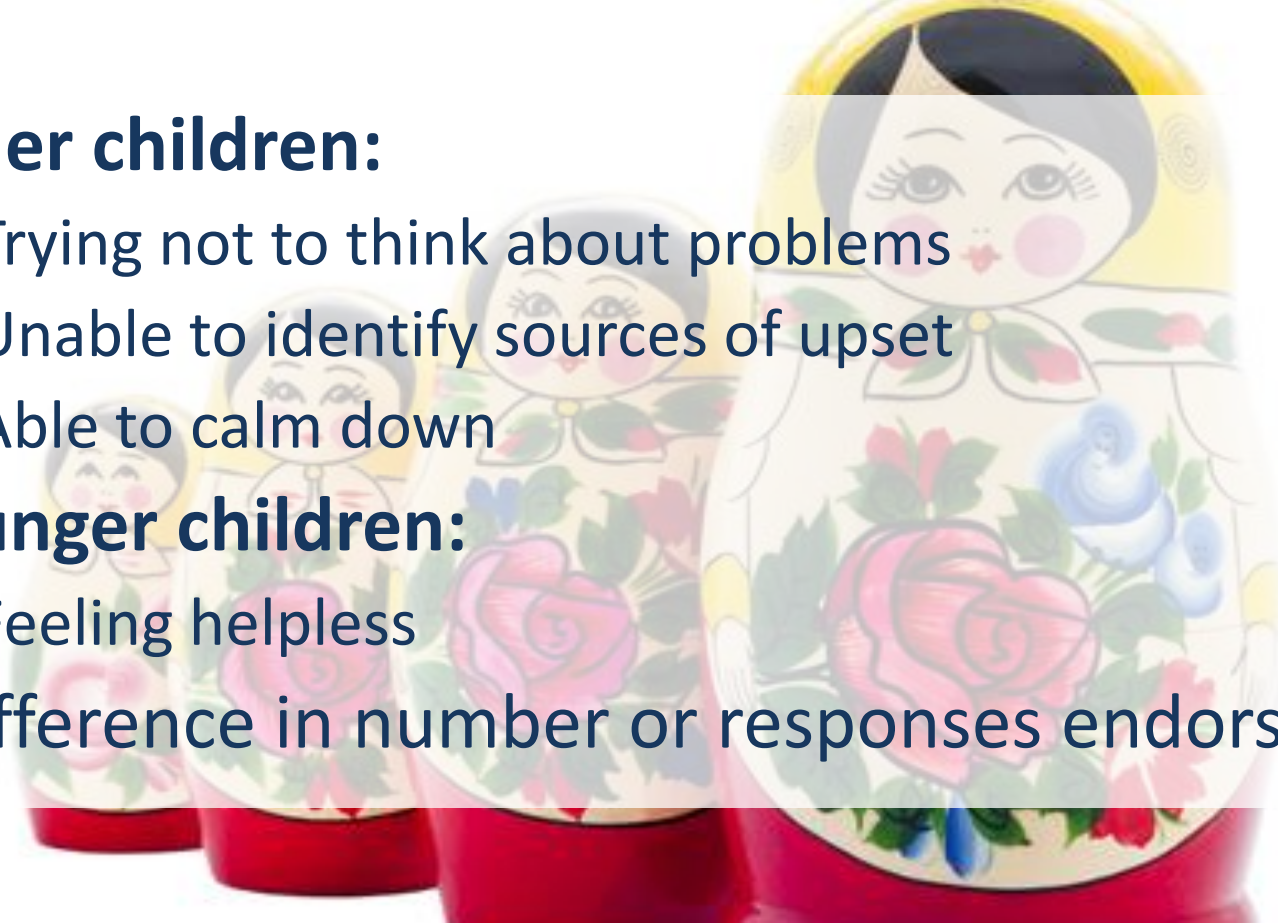
- **Older children:**

- Trying not to think about problems
- Unable to identify sources of upset
- Able to calm down

- **Younger children:**

- Feeling helpless

No difference in number or responses endorsed



Association with symptomatology

| Lower levels of anxiety | Higher levels of anxiety |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 'Can do' confidence* | Preoccupation |
| Looking on the bright side* | Feeling helpless |
| Managing feelings of upset | Getting angry |
| Calming oneself down† | Being upset without knowing why |
| | Perseverative responses* |

* Effect stronger for girls

† Effect stronger for older children

- Consistent relationships between children's coping and emotional outcomes
- Some coping styles may be more adaptive than others
- (Some) evidence to support gender and age differences in relationships between coping and anxiety
- Implications for intervention

Next steps...

- Development of coping – strategies over time
- Longitudinal investigation of causal direction
- Any questions?



References

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