

# Positive Psychology, Psychotherapy & Cognitive Behavioral Sciences

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## Psychological resilience of life transitions: Coping flexibility as an adaptive quality

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Stressful life changes are inevitable in an ever-changing and complex world, and psychological adjustment to stressful life transitions is thus a crucial life task for many people nowadays. Such an adjustment process is often complicated and lengthy, and may even elicit undesirable consequences. Psychological resilience is thus proposed as an adaptive psychological quality that fosters effective adjustment to stressful life changes. In the extant literature, researchers have conceptualized psychological resilience in a vast variety of ways. Our research team applied this construct to the context of coping, and operationalized it by assessing the levels of coping flexibility. Grounded in the person-situation inter-actionist approach, coping flexibility refers to the ability to deploy coping strategies that meet the specific demands of an array of stressful life events. This construct comprises three components: (a) cognitive flexibility, (b) response flexibility, and (c) a good match or “fit” between strategy characteristics and situational demands. Our research team has evaluated the effectiveness of this construct in explaining individual differences in psychological adjustment to stressful life transitions. As consistently shown in the findings derived from our research programs, coping flexibility was positively associated with a range of desirable mental and physical health outcomes among both community and patient samples, thus attesting to the adaptive role of coping flexibility in psychological adjustment to stressful life changes.

### Biography

Cecilia Cheng is a Professor of Psychology at the University of Hong Kong. She specializes in personality, social, health, and cross-cultural psychology. She received the ICP Early Career Research Award in 2000, Fulbright Senior Scholar Award in 2009, Cambridge Hughes Hall Fellowship in 2013, and RGC Humanities and Social Sciences Prestigious Fellowship in 2015. She was an Associate Editor of *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (Personality Processes and Individual Differences section). At the University of Hong Kong, her research team seeks to enhance both mental and physical health for quality living for Hong Kong people. To realize this aim, the team applies theoretical frameworks from personality and social psychology to the understanding of real-life problems such as stress and coping, psychosomatic disorders, information technology addiction, emotional disorders, and health-risk behaviors. The research group also organizes workshops, courses, and lectures to promote public awareness regarding mental and physical health.

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