

Coping with social stress: Like parent like adolescent

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Coping with Social Stress in Adolescence

- Social stress peaks during early adolescence (Duchesne et al., 2012)
- Adolescent peer stress coping is key for development; engagement coping linked with better adjustment, disengagement coping linked with poorer outcomes
- Indicators of engagement vs disengagement coping to peer stress
 - Level of attention to the peer stressor
 - (i.e., problem-focus or problem-avoidance)
 - Receptivity to parental advice
 - (i.e., support-receptivity or support-resistance)
 - Inclination to approach the social stressor
 - (i.e., social approach or social avoidance)

Parental Role in Adolescent Coping

Engaged Coping Style - Support-Seeking



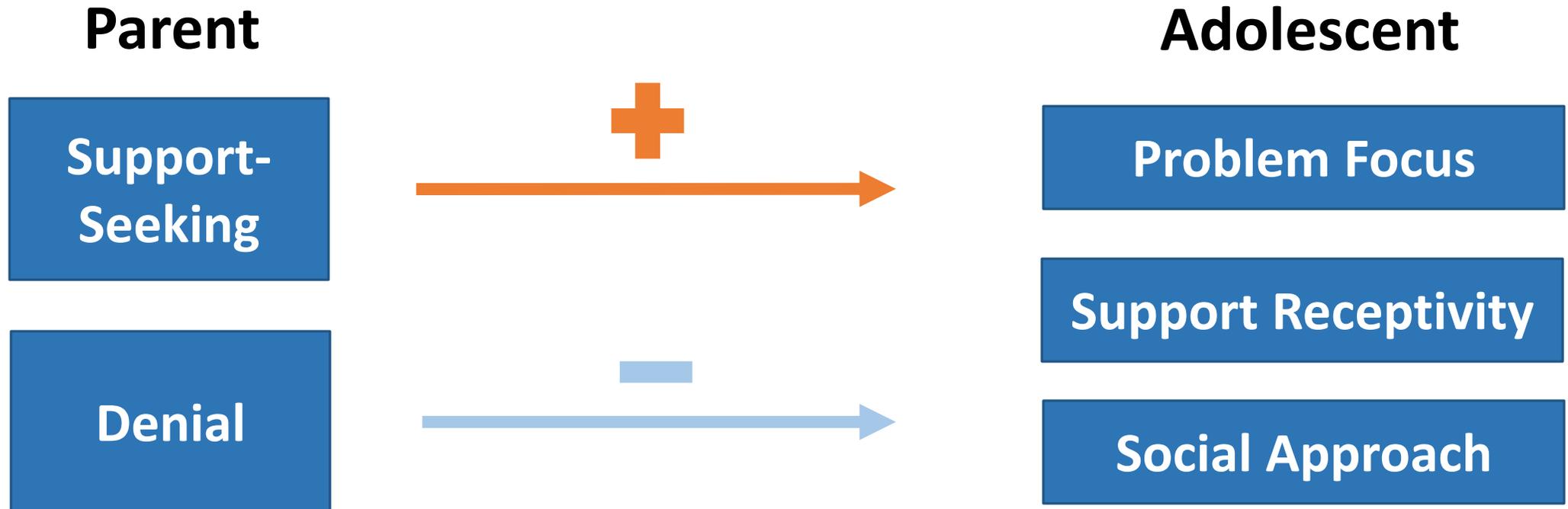
Adolescent is motivated to focus on their own peer problems, seek advice, and approach challenging social scenarios.

Disengaged Coping style - Denial



Adolescents may view stressors as intimidating or something to avoid, so they may resist advice, or withdraw from social situations.

The Present Study



Methods

- Participants:
 - 80 early adolescents ages 9-14 ($M = 11.92$; $SD = 1.27$)
 - 55% male; 55% African American, 43% Caucasian, 2% other race/ethnicity
 - One parent participated (79% biological mothers)
- Procedure:
 - Laboratory visit:
 - Parent & adolescent completed questionnaires
 - Participated in lab activities



Predictors: Parental Support-Seeking and Denial Coping

(Carver, 1997)

Support-Seeking Coping Style

“I try to get advice or help from other people about what to do.”

4 Items

$\alpha = .89$

Denial Coping Style

“I refuse to believe that it has happened.”

2 Items

$\alpha = .84$

Outcomes: Adolescent Coping with Peer Stress

Two trained researchers independently coded the *parent-adolescent discussion* for 3 dimensions of adolescent coping strategies.

Problem Focus

Attention to the social stressor

1 = *Mostly off-topic comments* to 5 = *Consistently on-topic*

$r = .89$

Support Receptivity

Openness to parental advice

1 = *Unreceptive*, to 5 = *Very receptive*

$r = .90$

Social Approach

Willingness to talk to & attempt to change peer judges' minds

1 = *Intense preference to avoid peer judges* to 5 = *Strongly desirous of talking to peer judges*

$r = .93$

Results

	Early adolescent Behavior in Dealing with Social Stressors					
	Problem-Focus		Support-Receptivity		Social Approach	
	B (SE)	β	B (SE)	β	B (SE)	β
Control Variables						
Gender	-.19 (.25)	-.08	.17 (.25)	.07	-.35 (.33)	-.12
Ethnicity	-.07 (.13)	-.07	-.04 (.13)	-.04	.10 (.18)	.08
SES	.07 (.09)	.11	.19 (.09)	.26*	-.28 (.12)	-.34*
Main Effects						
PR Support Coping	.41 (.24)	.19†	.85 (.23)	.38***	.88 (.31)	.33**
PR Denial Coping	-.79 (.30)	-.30**	-.36 (.29)	-.13	-.67 (.39)	-.21†
R ²	14.8%		23.8%		22.5%	

Conclusions

- Parents' approaches to coping with their own social stress may be mirrored by their early adolescents (i.e., social learning theory; Bandura, 1977)
- Parent educators can teach parents to practice more support-seeking and less denial coping in response to their own social challenges
- Youth, in turn, may mirror this more engaged, effective approach in their own common-occurring peer stressors.