

## Lesson Plan: Stress and Coping with Climate Change

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As an **undergraduate Psychology** teacher, you can use this set of computer-based tools to teach **Stress and Coping**.

This lesson plan will help students to learn about stress: its nature, its causes, and its consequences for individuals. Students will also view and discuss a resource that reports on the impact of climate change—as a causative factor of stress—on the lives of people globally. Finally, students will participate in a group activity to examine the various characteristics and causes of stress, as evidenced in the lives of these individuals.

Thus, the use of this lesson plan allows you to integrate the teaching of a climate-related topic with a core topic in **Psychology**.

Use this lesson plan to help your students find answers to:

- What is stress and coping?
- What are the types of factors that cause stress?
- What are some of the most important stressors?
- How does stress impact human health?
- How is task-related performance affected by stress?
- What are the different strategies used to cope with stress?
- Why are some people better able to cope with stress?
- What is the possible link between climate-related factors and stress?

### About the Lesson Plan

- Grade Level: **Undergraduate**
- Discipline: **Psychology**
- Topic(s) in Discipline: **Stress, Coping, GAS Model, Cognitive Appraisal of Stress, Stressors, Stress Management**

- Climate Topic: **Climate and Health, Climate Mitigation and Adaptation**
- Location: **Global, Bolivia, Bangladesh, Bahamas, Malawi**
- Access: **Online, Offline**
- Language(s): **English**
- Approximate Time Required: **180 min**

# 1 Contents

## 1. Reading (90 min)

A reading (chapter) that introduces the characteristics, causes, and consequences of stress. The reading describes physiological responses to stressors, the cognitive appraisal of a situation, various types of factors that can cause stress, the effect of stress on health and task-related performance, and various coping strategies.

This reading can be accessed at:

<https://opentextbc.ca/introductiontopsychology/chapter/chapter-15-health-stress-and-coping/> (Chapter 16)

## 2. Video (~30-45 min)

A video that shows the role of climate change as a stressor on the lives of people around the globe and from various walks of life through their own testimonies.

This video can be accessed at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrulaPiFFHc>

### 3. Classroom Activity (Suggested Group Activity) (~45 min)

An engaging role-play activity to improve students' understanding of climate change as a stressor.

### 4. Suggested questions/assignments for learning evaluation

- What is stress and coping?
- What are the types of factors that cause stress?
- What are some of the most important stressors?
- How does stress impact human health?
- How is task-related performance affected by stress?
- What are the different strategies which can be used to cope with stress?
- Why are some people better able to cope with stress?
- What is the impact of climate related factors and climate change on stress?

## 2 Step-by-step User Guide

Here is a step-by-step guide to using this lesson plan in the classroom/laboratory. We have suggested these steps as a possible plan of action. You may customize the lesson plan according to your preferences and requirements.

### 1. Introduce the topic through a reading

Introduce the topic of stress and coping by using the chapter [16. Health, Stress, and Coping](#) (Chapter 16) by Jennifer Walinga, from "[Introduction to Psychology – 1st Canadian Edition](#)" by BC Open Textbooks.

Use this reading to:

- explain stressors
- discuss the physiological responses to stressors with special emphasis on the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) model by Hans Selye
- elaborate on the physical, psychological, personality-related, social, and cultural factors that can cause stress
- discuss the impact of stress on health and task-related performance
- list and deliberate on the various coping strategies used to manage stress

Note: Use the included sub-chapters to study these topics by:

- first noting the learning objectives,
- then discussing the text to explain concepts,
- then analyzing the mentioned real-life scenarios to understand the situations of stress, and
- finally, assessing the learning through the end-of-section exercises.

The reading is available at <https://opentextbc.ca/introductiontopsychology/chapter/chapter-15-health-stress-and-coping/>.

## 2. Explore the topic using a video

Play the video, “[The human face of climate change](#)” by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to explore the effect of climate-related factors and perceived climate change as a stressor in people’s lives. The video features individuals—from different parts of the world and various walks of life—talking about the impact of climate change on their lives.

- Pause the video at will to enquire whether students could recognize stress in the individuals featured. Use the video to elaborate on the physical and psychological manifestation of stress.
- Recall the testimonies of different persons featured in the video to discuss their stress scenarios. Enumerate the stressors for each or few of the individuals, e.g., helplessness due to unpredictability and lack of control over intensity of floods and hurricanes in Long Island, Bahamas, as testified by 42-year-old farmer Bernard Knowles; the need to find new jobs, as testified by Filiberto Maraza, a farmer from Bolivia; and the difficulty of finding food on an everyday basis, as testified by the chief of traditional authority from a village in Central Malawi.
- Finally, discuss the characteristics of stress and coping strategies that are employed in such scenarios.

The video is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrulaPiFFHc>

### 3. Facilitate a group activity to improve understanding of stress and coping

Engage the students in a role play activity called “A Day in the Life Of”; in this activity, teams will imagine and play out a day in the life of the persons from the above video to understand the nature and consequences of stress experienced by these individuals. For example, someone could play the role of Jessica Petsch, an 11-year-old schoolgirl from the Bahamas, who was affected by severe floods. Each team can be given 10 minutes to choose a character from the video and to build a story around a day in the life of this individual. In this activity, students will engage with the topic at a deeper level, thus enabling them to reflect on and empathize with the lived-out experiences of individuals impacted by climate change.

### 4. Questions/Assignments

Use the tools and the concepts learned so far to discuss and determine answers to the following questions:

- What is stress and coping?
- What are the types of factors that cause stress?
- What are some of the most important stressors?
- How does stress impact human health?
- How is task related performance affected by stress?
- What are the different strategies which can be used to cope with stress?
- Why are some people better able to cope with stress?
- What is the impact of climate related factors and climate change on stress?

## 3 Learning Outcomes

The tools in this lesson plan will enable students to:

- discuss the nature and characteristics of stress
- identify physical, psychological, personality-related, and social and cultural factors that can cause stress

- explain the physical and work-related consequences of stress
- elaborate on various coping strategies used by individuals
- discuss the pervasiveness of stress caused by climate change

## 4 Additional Resources

If you or your students would like to explore the topic further, these additional resources will be useful.

### 1. Reading

A reading from the “[Psychology and Climate Change](#)” booklet (Section 4, pg. 52 – 62) by the American Psychological Association (APA). The chapter discusses adaptation to and coping with the perceived threat and real impacts of climate change.

This reading can be accessed at:

<https://www.apa.org/science/about/publications/climate-change-booklet.pdf>

### 2. Reading

A short-fiction anthology of short stories, “[2047: Short Stories from Our Common Future](#)”, by Tanja Rohini Bisgaard et al. gives the authors’ perspectives on how the world around us could change by the year 2047 as a result of climate change. Only the first story, “[Still Waters](#)” by Kimberley Christensen, is accessible for free.

The links to access the introduction to the book and the first story (and for book purchase) can be obtained at:

<https://2047ourcommonfuture.com/>.

## 5 Credits/Copyrights

All the teaching tools in our collated list are owned by the corresponding creators/authors/organizations as listed on their websites. Please view the individual copyright and ownership details for each tool by following the individual links provided.

We have selected and analyzed the tools that align with the overall objective of our project and have provided the corresponding links. We do not claim ownership of or responsibility/liability for any of the listed tools.

### 1. Reading, “16. Health, Stress, and Coping”

Written by Jennifer Walinga. Chapter 16 from “Introduction to Psychology - 1st Canadian Edition” by [BC Open Textbooks](#)

### 2. Video, “The human face of climate change”

From the [International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies \(IFRC\)](#)

### 3. Additional Resources

“Psychology and Climate Change”, [American Psychology Association \(APA\)](#)

“2047: Short Stories from Our Common Future”, [Tanja Bisgaard et al.](#)