

There's More Online!

- ✓ CARTOON Stress Appraisals
- ✓ GRAPHIC ORGANIZER
- ✓ TABLE Types of Conflict Situations
- ✓ SELF-CHECK QUIZ



LESSON 1

Sources of Stress

Reading **HELPDESK**



Academic Vocabulary

- violate
- conduct

Content Vocabulary

- stress
- stressor
- stress reaction
- distress
- eustress
- conflict situation

TAKING NOTES:

Key Ideas and Details

IDENTIFYING Use a graphic organizer like the one below to identify different conflict situations and provide an example of each situation.

Conflict Situation	Example

ESSENTIAL QUESTION • How does stress influence behavior?

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

Stress can come in many forms in our daily lives. When situations do not go our way, unexpected things happen, or we have expectations placed on us that we are not sure we can live up to, we may feel stress. Stress is not only caused by major events. Minor irritations can also cause stress. Every day we have to make choices among different options that are presented to us, which can all create stress.

The Components of Stress

GUIDING QUESTION What is the difference between primary and secondary appraisals?

Brandon, an ambitious high school junior, fails his final exam in French; he is terrified that his chances of getting into college have been jeopardized, and a day or two later he develops an unsightly rash. Juanita, Brandon's classmate, learns that her parents cannot afford to pay her tuition for her first year of college; her friends wonder why she has suddenly become so bad-tempered. Angela gets her first leading role in a high school play; while running to call her boyfriend, she realizes that she cannot remember his phone number.

Brandon, Juanita, and Angela all have one thing in common: they are experiencing stress, which can have a variety of effects. When Brandon is terrified because of his failure, he experiences emotional stress. He also has a physical reaction when he develops the rash. Angela suddenly forgets her boyfriend's phone number because the stress, even though it is positive, has affected her thought processes.

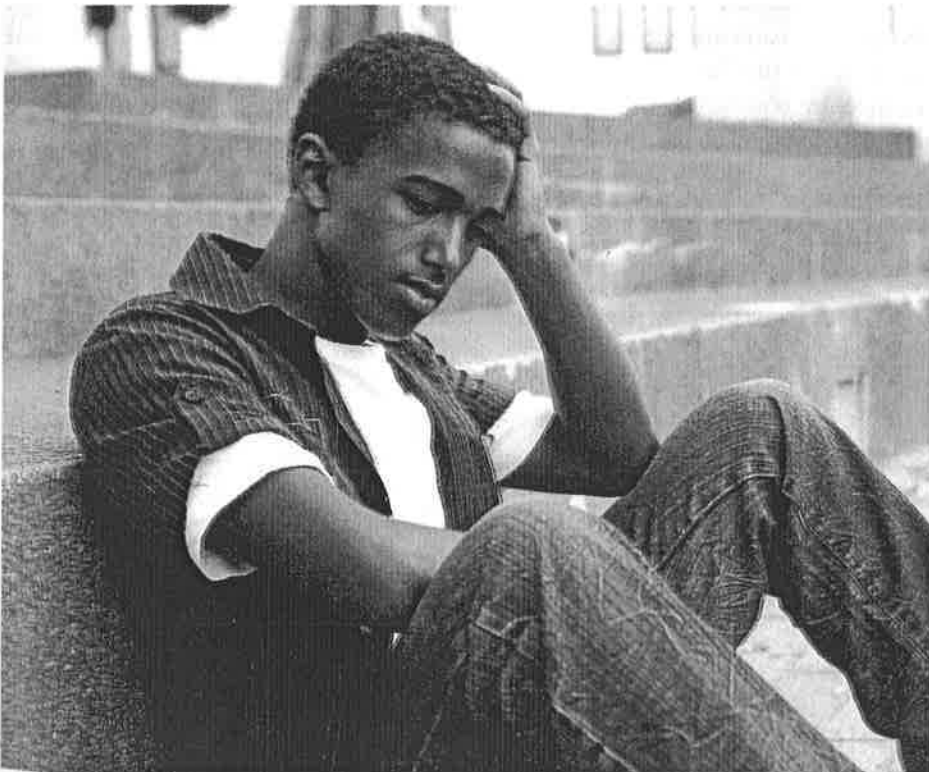
What exactly is stress? Whether we defined it as stress or not it is something we all have experienced. There are many definitions, and even researchers in the field use the term in several ways. To some psychologists, stress is an *event* or *situation* that produces tension or worry. Others describe it as an individual's physical or psychological *response* to such an event or situation. Still other researchers regard stress as a person's *perception* of the event or situation. A slight variation on each of these ideas is the definition that will be used in this chapter. **Stress** is the anxious or threatening feeling resulting from our appraisal of a situation and our reaction to demands placed upon us.

To refer to the stress-producing event or situation, we shall use the term **stressor**. It is important to note that an event that is a stressor for one person may not be for another. For example, traveling in an airplane may be a stressor for someone who has never flown but not for a flight attendant. Stress, then, will be used to refer to a person's reactions—whether perceptual, cognitive, physical, or emotional—to a stressor. To discuss the body's observable response to a stressor, we shall use the term **stress reaction**.

Many people think of stress only as a condition to be avoided. Canadian researcher Hans Selye (1907–1982), however, distinguished between two different types of stress. Negative stress, or **distress**, stems from acute anxiety or pressure and can take a harsh toll on the mind and body. Positive stress, or **eustress**, results from the strivings and challenges that are the spice of life.

Stress is a normal, even essential, part of life that goes hand in hand with working toward any goal or facing any challenge. In fact, as athletes gearing up for a game or students cramming for an exam can testify, stress can spur us on to greater effectiveness and achievement in some situations. In addition, whether we like it or not, we cannot escape stress. “Complete freedom from stress,” notes one psychologist, “is death.” We can, however, learn to cope with stress so that it makes our lives interesting without overwhelming us.

There is another component of stress that can influence how it affects people's lives. Psychologist Richard Lazarus believed that how a person registers and evaluates an event is what makes the difference. In fact, Lazarus sometimes quoted Shakespeare: “For there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.” Lazarus was saying that it is our response to a situation, not the situation itself, that determines whether we will experience stress. This is called the cognitive model of stress. Stress, therefore, is not necessarily a result of how large or serious our problems are, but rather whether we think we are capable of handling them. For example, you may feel nervous and tense before taking an important exam. However, once you see the exam and realize you are well prepared, you relax. While you still may be under some stress, it has greatly lessened.



stress a person's reaction to his or her inability to cope with a certain tense event or situation

stressor a stress-producing event or situation

stress reaction the body's response to a stressor

distress stress that stems from acute anxiety or pressure

eustress positive stress, which results from motivating strivings and challenges

Most of us have experienced a headache, upset stomach, muscle tension, or sleeplessness as a result of feeling stressed.

► CRITICAL THINKING

Explaining What causes stress?

Approach-Approach	Avoidance-Avoidance	Approach-Avoidance	Double Approach-Avoidance
You must choose between two attractive options.	You must choose between two disagreeable options.	You find yourself in a situation that has both enjoyable and disagreeable consequences.	You must choose between multiple options, each of which has pleasurable and disagreeable aspects.
Do I want to go to the concert or ballgame on Saturday?	Should I stay up all night studying for my physics final or math final?	Should I ask him to go to the party with me? (He may say yes, or he may say no.)	Should I wait for my girlfriend to call me, or should I just go out with my friends?

TABLE ^

TYPES OF CONFLICT SITUATIONS

Conflict situations cause stress because you must give up something you want to get or face something you wish to avoid.

► CRITICAL THINKING

- 1. Contrasting** How is the double approach-avoidance conflict different from the approach-avoidance conflict?
- 2. Analyzing** Why would an approach-approach conflict be just as difficult as an avoidance-avoidance conflict?

conflict situation when a person must choose between two or more options that tend to result from opposing motives

Conflict Situations

In our daily lives, we often have to evaluate situations and then make difficult decisions between two or more options—for example, going to a movie with friends or staying home to study for tomorrow’s exam. These alternatives tend to result from conflicting motives—say, the desire to socialize versus the desire to do well in school—and they are major sources of stress. These choices create **conflict situations**, and they fall into four broad categories: *Approach-Approach*, *Avoidance-Avoidance*, *Approach-Avoidance*, *Double Approach-Avoidance*.

In an *approach-approach conflict*, the individual must choose between *two attractive alternatives*. For example, a high school senior has been accepted at two excellent colleges, and he must decide which one to attend. Such a “conflict” is generally easy to resolve. The student in this situation will find some reason to attend one college rather than the other—perhaps one college is located in a better climate or has more courses in his intended major field. An approach-approach conflict is a conflict in name only. It does not produce a great deal of stress because both choices are satisfying.

An *avoidance-avoidance conflict* occurs when an individual confronts *two unattractive alternatives*. Consider the case of a college graduate who is unable to find a job after many months of searching. She is finally offered a position that is not in her field of education, does not pay very well, and offers her no future. Should she accept the position, or should she continue to look for something better? Either course of action will be frustrating to her, and there is usually a high level of indecision and stress. The young woman in this example may decide that one option is the “lesser of two evils,” or she may try to escape the decision—for instance, by registering with a temporary-employment agency until she finds a more satisfactory job.

An individual who wants to do something but has fears or doubts or is repulsed by it at the same time is experiencing an *approach-avoidance conflict*. For example, a man wants to ask for a raise, but he is afraid he will be fired if he does. In cases like this, the degree of stress depends on the intensity of the desire or of the perceived threat. Resolution of this type of conflict often is very difficult and depends generally on the person’s finding added reasons to choose one alternative over the other. The man in this example may learn that his boss thinks his work has been excellent; therefore, he feels there is little risk of being fired if he asks for more money.

Probably the most common conflict situation is a *double approach-avoidance conflict* in which the individual must choose between *two or more alternatives, each of which has attractive and unattractive aspects*. To use a simple illustration, a young woman working in Chicago cannot decide whether to spend her vacation in Paris or at her parents’ home in North Carolina. She has never been to Paris, but the airfare and hotel bills will be more than she can really afford. Visiting her parents will be inexpensive and relaxing but not very exciting. As in an approach-avoidance conflict, the degree of stress generated depends on the intensity of the attractions and repulsions.

Appraising a Situation

Why is it that some people view a situation, such as looking for a parking space, as stressful while others do not? The level of stress you feel depends on how you appraise the situation. There are two basic types of appraisals: primary and secondary.

Primary appraisal refers to our immediate evaluation of a situation. For instance, can we meet the demands of this situation? Does this situation present us with more challenges than we think we can handle? There are three ways you can appraise a situation—as irrelevant, positive, or negative. For example, if your teacher suddenly announces a pop quiz, you may feel okay about the situation. You think you know the material, and your teacher does not give difficult quizzes. You may look forward to pop quizzes and feel positive about the situation because you know the material on the quiz and are assured of a good grade. You may also evaluate the situation as a negative one—you have not looked at your notes in days. In this last example, you feel stressed.

Secondary appraisal occurs when we evaluate the different options for coping. In addition, we must consider our available resources. We then make a decision on how to deal with the potentially stressful situation. Secondary appraisals are slower and more deliberate than primary appraisals.

At this point, we may decide who should be held accountable for the situation. If the stress is negative, who should be blamed? If it is positive, who should be given the credit? In addition, we may see the situation as simply happening by chance. The way that we see who or what should be held accountable helps guide us in what emotions we should experience. For example, if we are involved in a minor car accident, our first reaction might be extreme stress. However, once it is clear the other driver is at fault, our stress will probably lessen. Another part of secondary appraisal is based on whether we expect the situation to change for the better or for the worse. This is referred to as future expectancy. Future expectancy influences what emotions we experience and the coping strategies we use. For example, if the other driver immediately admits that he or she is at fault, we will probably experience less stress than if he or she adamantly denies any responsibility.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Making Connections When appraising a situation in which you are late for school, what would you consider before deciding how stressed you feel about it?

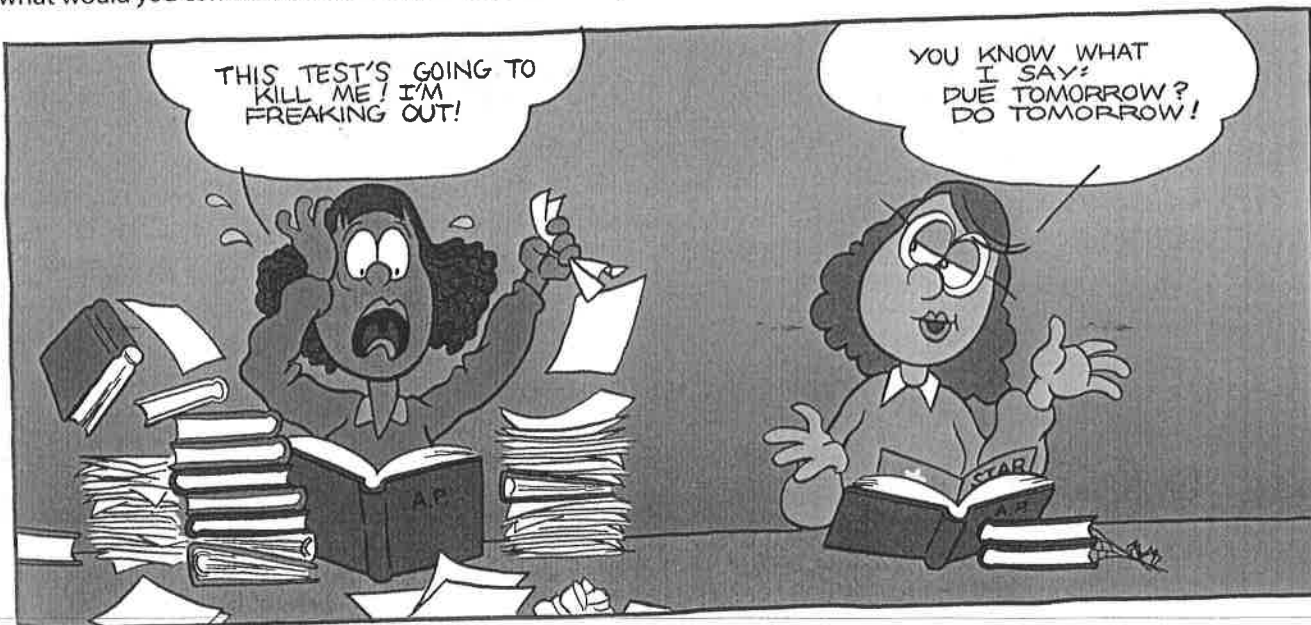
CARTOON

STRESS APPRAISALS

People appraise situations differently. Some see a particular situation as stressful while others handle it with relative ease.

CRITICAL THINKING

- Analyzing Visuals** What is each teen's primary appraisal of the situation in the cartoon?
- Evaluating** What are the benefits of making a secondary appraisal of a situation?



Environmental Stressors

GUIDING QUESTION *How do life changes result in stressors?*

TABLE

THE SOCIAL READJUSTMENT RATING SCALE

The SRRS lists 43 items that require individuals to make the most changes in their lives. Each number (mean value) refers to the expected impact that event would have on one's life. To obtain your score, add the numbers associated with each event you experienced in the past year. The total number reflects how much life change you have experienced.

CRITICAL THINKING

- Analyzing** Which of the life events have the greatest impact on an individual?
- Speculating** Why do you think the scale does not work the same for everyone?

Environmental conditions such as noise may cause stress on the job, and these factors can have similar effects on the public at large. In fact, surveys have shown that Americans regard noise as one of the foremost irritants in their lives. Noise is particularly aggravating when it is loud, irregular, or uncontrollable. Constant exposure to unpleasant noise levels can lead to hearing loss and can interfere with learning. One study found that third and fourth graders in the flight path of a major airport showed significant increases in blood pressure and stress hormones, such as cortisol, compared to those who were not exposed to the noise. People exposed to excessive noise at work have reported more headaches, nausea, and moodiness than others.

Noise is not the only environmental stressor that tends to irritate people. Odors may also trigger stress in people. Studies have revealed that tobacco smoke odors and industrial odors such as factory smoke, industrial glues, and chemical smells can be an irritant to some subjects, although some people tend to cope with the stressors better than others. Stressors may also be triggered by temperature. Environments that are too hot or too cold increase demands on the body. Elevated humidity and lack of air movement can also have an effect on the body's ability to cope, increasing the level of psychological discomfort at the same time that physical discomfort grows.

Rank	Life Event	Mean Value
1	Death of spouse	100
2	Divorce	73
3	Marital separation	65
4	Jail term	63
5	Death of close family member	63
6	Personal injury or illness	53
7	Marriage	50
8	Fired at work	47
9	Marital reconciliation	45
10	Retirement	45
11	Change in health of family member	44
12	Pregnancy	40
13	Sex difficulties	39
14	Gain of new family member	39
15	Business readjustment	39
16	Change in financial state	38
17	Death of close friend	37
18	Change to different line of work	36
19	Change in number of arguments with spouse	35
20	Mortgage over \$10,000	31
21	Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	30
22	Change in responsibilities at work	29

Rank	Life Event	Mean Value
23	Son or daughter leaving home	29
24	Trouble with in-laws	29
25	Outstanding personal achievement	28
26	Spouse begins or stops work	26
27	Begin or end school	26
28	Change in living conditions	25
29	Revision of personal habits	24
30	Trouble with boss	23
31	Change in work hours or conditions	20
32	Change in residence	20
33	Change in schools	20
34	Change in recreation	19
35	Change in church activities	19
36	Change in social activities	18
37	Mortgage or loans less than \$10,000	17
38	Change in sleeping habits	16
39	Change in number of family get-togethers	15
40	Change in eating habits	15
41	Vacation	14
42	Christmas	12
43	Minor violations of the law	12

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It was long assumed that crowding was an environmental stressor. Indeed, most people dislike certain high-density situations and can feel stress when other people get too close. Studies on crowding have found a relationship between high-rise apartments with many crowded people and aggression. Crowding itself, however, is not the problem. The problems occur not when you are crowded but when you *feel* crowded. For instance, a crowded subway car could make one person feel crowded or even claustrophobic, while another person in the same subway car could fall asleep.

Some crowding situations bring about a similar reaction in most people. In a 1975 study psychologist Jonathan Freedman concluded that the effects of crowding depend on the situation. If the situation is pleasant, crowding makes people feel better; if the situation is unpleasant, crowding makes them feel worse. In other words, being packed together *intensifies* people's reactions, but it does not *create* them.

One situation in which crowding is of great concern is in prisons. Research shows that inmates in overcrowded prisons have higher levels of stress and that the rate of both violent and nonviolent deaths is higher there than in less crowded prisons. A long-term Japanese study showed a direct relationship among overcrowding, prisoners **violating** rules, and violent behavior. Overcrowding makes the job of the prison staff more difficult and puts them at greater risk for harm. The extreme loss of privacy is also a major factor in stress levels for the prisoners. For example, research shows that prisoners typically have less stress if they are in a private cell, even if this means that they have less physical space than in a larger shared cell.

Life Changes and Stress

Our lives are full of major life changes and events such as marriage, divorce, a serious illness, a new job, moving away, and deaths in the family. All of these events are important sources of stress. Common to most of these events is the separation of an individual from familiar friends, relations, or colleagues. Positive events can bring about stress just as much as those that are negative. Marriage, while considered a positive change, may involve breaking free from many long-standing ties.

Many stress researchers have concentrated on these life changes to determine how much stress they are likely to cause. Two of the foremost researchers into the effect of life changes are Thomas H. Holmes and Richard H. Rahe, who developed a scale to measure the effects of 43 common events, ranging from the death of a spouse to going on a vacation. Holmes and Rahe asked a cross section of the population to rate each of these events on a scale of 1 to 100, with marriage assigned a value of 50, on the basis of how much adjustment the event required. The figures they obtained form the basis of their Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS). Note that the SRRS was created in 1967 using male adults. Also note that one life change can trigger others, greatly increasing the level of stress.

Quick Lab

WHAT STRESSES TEENAGERS?

The SRRS lists events considered stressful for adults. Assume your job is to develop a similar scale for teenagers. In what ways would your scale be different?

Procedure

1. First, develop a list of life events that you deem stressful to teenagers and rank them from 1 to 20, with 20 being the most stressful. Assign each event a value based on how much adjustment the event requires.
2. Provide a copy of your list to several friends and ask them to circle the events that they have experienced in the past year.
3. Ask each person to indicate any illnesses they have had in the past year.

Analysis

1. For each person, add up the values for the events they have circled. Note the illnesses they recorded.
2. Does your rating scale show any relationship between stressful events that teenagers face and illnesses they experience? Explain.

violate to go against or refuse to obey a rule, law, or agreement

More ABOUT...

Personal Space

The subway system in Tokyo hires people to push more people onto the subways during rush hours. It is an accepted part of Japanese culture to be able to function effectively within a small personal space. People in Middle Eastern societies also tend to have markedly small personal spaces compared to North Americans. As a result, they stand much closer in a conversation than is comfortable for most natives of the United States or Canada.

conduct a person's behavior in a particular place or situation

Daily stressors such as minor arguments or dealing with financial problems are called hassles.

► CRITICAL THINKING

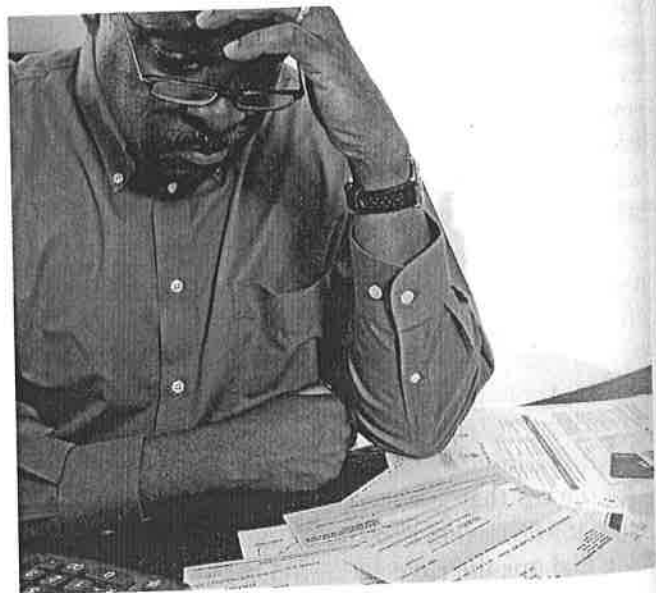
Making Connections Describe one hassle and one uplift you have experienced in the last week.

Marriage, for example, may be accompanied by a change in financial status, a change in living conditions, and a change in residence—collectively much more stressful than any one source listed on the scale.

Rahe administered this scale to thousands of naval officers and enlisted men and found that the higher a man's score, the more likely he was to become physically ill. Men with scores below 150 tended to remain healthy, while about 70 percent of those with scores over 300 became sick. There are problems, however. Some of the items on the SRRS may result from illness, rather than cause it. For example, for air traffic controllers, higher traffic volume and lower visual clarity lead to increased mood and health complaints. Several studies suggest there is only a small relationship between stressful life events and illness. The scale also fails to measure stress caused by ongoing situations such as racism, poverty, and ignored daily problems.

Since the SRRS scale was originally established, it has been revised and used to test the stress levels of women as well as men. One study rated the stress levels of female graduate students in an online graduate program. The study revealed that female graduate students have a considerable amount of stress related to their families and finances as well as their health and pressures to succeed. The study found significant stress levels in nearly all of the students, but revealed that demographic data also played a part. Female students with the highest stress levels were single, African American, and older. According to the study, family, social, and career pressures contributed to the need of the women to pursue a higher degree and to succeed in their efforts.

The scale has also been adapted to measure stress levels for students (teenagers and college-aged young adults). While stress levels in different groups of college students vary, research shows that most new students experience stress as a result of a number of factors. Being away from families and living in close quarters can be new experiences. Students may find the coursework more challenging than they anticipated. They often worry about money and some students must juggle a job along with their studies. Social activities may make it hard to get enough sleep. Meals may not be well balanced and may be eaten on the go. Students also must be responsible for their own **conduct**, such as attending classes and completing their homework or assignments without having their parents around to monitor them. As with many situations in life, it is the combination of many changes occurring at the same time that leads to stress.



During day-to-day living, we encounter common stressors such as:

- Household duties (cleaning, cooking, shopping)
- Concerns about health
- Time pressures (not enough time to get something done)
- Environmental hassles (noise, pollution, crime)
- Financial hassles (paying bills, saving for the future)
- Worries about our jobs
- Concerns about our futures
- Inner stressors (feelings of low self-esteem or loneliness)

Source: Lazarus et al, 1985.

Hassles

In addition to the impact that major stressful events such as a divorce or a death in the family can have, psychologists have studied the effects that relatively minor, day-to-day stressors have on health. These more common stressors are called *hassles*. Examples of hassles include losing your car keys, being caught in a crowded elevator, getting in a minor argument with someone in your family, or being late for work or school because you were stuck in traffic. Research has found a connection between these daily problems and health issues. It may be that these common stressors gradually weaken the body's defense system, making it harder to fight off potential health problems.

It has also been suggested that small, positive events, called *uplifts*, can protect against stress. Uplifts are things that make a person feel good, such as winning a tough chess match, going out to lunch with a good friend, or doing well on a semester exam. Some psychologists claim that uplifts can have the opposite effect of hassles; they can reduce stress and protect a person's health.

Every one of us faces many daily stresses—traffic, arguments, car trouble, and so on. The primary effects of stress might be caused by the impact of little things that just constantly seem to bother us. Seventy-five married couples recorded their everyday stressors, and it turned out that those with more of the common stressors had significantly more health problems, such as sore throats and headaches, which they experienced later.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Summarizing What effect can everyday stressors have on health problems?

< TABLE

HASSLES

We face frustrations every day—these are the daily stressors of life.

CRITICAL THINKING

1. **Analyzing** How can we combat the effects of hassles?
2. **Comparing** How are these hassles different from the Social Readjustment Rating Scale?

LESSON 1 REVIEW



Reviewing Vocabulary

1. **Contrasting** What is the difference between eustress and distress? Should stress always be avoided? Explain.

Using Your Notes

2. **Applying** Use your notes to describe the different conflict situations. Provide an example of a double approach-avoidance conflict regarding school.

Answering the Guiding Questions

3. **Differentiating** What is the difference between a primary and secondary appraisal?

4. **Analyzing** How do life changes result in stressors?

Writing Activity

5. **Informative/Explanatory** Think of a time when you were bothered by environmental stressors such as noise, odor, heat, cold, or crowding. Write a short narrative that describes the stressors and the way that you coped with, or attempted to cope with, these stressors. Explain how the stressors affected you. Identify which, if any, of these stressors might have affected someone from another culture differently.