

Coping with stress

When it comes to coping with life's stresses, men and women from any culture may gain health benefits by having many social roles and relationships.

Swinburne researchers Dr Elizabeth Hardie, Dr Christine Critchley and former honours student Zoe Morris found that people with many social roles and lots of close personal ties, as well as a sense of their unique individuality, seem to have the best coping skills.

Their research assessed stress levels, coping styles and health outcomes in around 900 Australian and Asian students and has received a prestigious Misumi award.

"Some coping styles were linked to better health and some to poorer health. For example, people who defined themselves by their unique individuality tended to cope with stress by



rejecting support from others and trying to solve their own problems. These independent people tended to have poorer health.

"It was also unhealthy to mostly define yourself through your connections with others. People whose sense of self was based on their social

relationships tended to rely too much on others for support. This interdependent style limited their ability to cope with stress, so these people tended to have poorer health.

"People who had many ways of defining themselves – unique individual, trusted friend, workmate, loyal fan, good citizen

– had a very wide variety of coping skills. They were able to cope with all types of stress and had the best health. In contrast, people with limited ways of defining themselves seemed to have fewer coping skills and, consequently, their health suffered.

"Interestingly, these patterns were not associated with gender or cultural background," she said.

"This research challenged the popular notion that people from western cultures are independent (individual), while those from eastern cultures are interdependent (collective).

"Instead, we found that men and women from all cultures define themselves, to varying degrees, in three important ways: as autonomous individuals, in close relation to significant others, and as members of social collectives.

Student health

The results of one of the most extensive research projects ever undertaken into the social and emotional health of Australian students have been released.

Based on a survey of more than 10,000 students from 81 secondary and primary schools across Australia, the ASG Student Social and Emotional Health Report, reveals that a large percentage of students are experiencing social and emotional difficulties.

The report found four-in-10 students worry too much; three-in-10 students are very nervous/stressed; two-in-10 students have felt very hopeless and depressed for a week and have stopped regular activities.

A third of students lose their temper a lot and are sometimes quite mean to others (bully). Two-thirds of students are not doing as well in their schoolwork as they could and four-in-10 students have difficulty calming down (poor resilience).

The ASG Student Social and Emotional Health Report is the culmination of six years of development and research of its lead author, Professor Michael E Bernard, University of Melbourne. [u](#)



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DATES 2008

ISSUE	RELEASE DATE	SPECIAL FEATURES
Semester 1		
Jan/Feb	Feb 19	ORIENTATION, Party Hard, Computers
March	Mar 18	SCHOLARSHIPS, Music, Wheels
April	Apr 15	TRAVEL, Money, Groove Street
May/June	May 13	COURSES, Party Hard, Health
Semester 2		
July/Aug	Aug 5	POST-GRAD, Money, Computers
Sept	Sep 2	SCHOLARSHIPS, Festivals, Groove Street
Oct	Sep 30	EMPLOYMENT, Wheels
Nov/Dec	Oct 28	TRAVEL, Party Hard, Look good

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