

SPACE LIFE SCIENCES SYMPOSIUM (A1)
Behaviour, Performance and Psychosocial Issues in Space (1)

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COPING STRATEGIES DURING AND AFTER SPACEFLIGHT: DATA FROM RETIRED
COSMONAUTS

Abstract

Coping is a dynamic physiological and psychological process in response to perceived environmental stress that functions to restore physiological homeostasis and reduce negative affect (Lazarus Folkman, 1984). Thematic content analysis was employed for references to 13 well-established coping strategies in interviews of 20 retired long-duration male cosmonauts. As in previous research with other space samples (Brcic, 2009; Suedfeld, Brcic, Legkaia, 2009) the retired cosmonauts mentioned problem-oriented strategies more frequently than emotion-oriented ones. In the present sample, Seeking Social Support, Planful Problem Solving (PPS), and Endurance/Obedience/Effort were the top three most mentioned coping strategies. Furthermore, cosmonauts who had spent more than a year in space, compared to those who had spent less than a year, also mentioned using PPS more as they recalled their career and retirement. Examining changes over time, spaceflight had a positive effect on Accepting Responsibility. Endurance/Obedience/Effort steadily decreased over time, while we found an inverted-U pattern for Distancing and Self-Control. Additional results in relation to other astronaut samples and the relationship between coping and post-flight growth will be further discussed.