Stress and motivation are often intertwined. When a person is motivated to do many things at once, it can result in a strain that leads to a stress reaction. A strain occurs when an individual is unable to meet the demands that are placed on him or her. The body reacts to this strain as a feeling of stress. Stress shows up in people as negative feelings, heightened arousal, psychological disorders, medical illness, and maladaptive behaviors. Stressors—life events that are negative and produce stress—can vary in the degree of distress that they produce. Even positive life events can cause stress.

Coping with life events and stress can occur in one of the following ways:

- Dealing with the problem itself
- Dealing with the emotions related to the problem

Problem-focused coping looks more deeply at the problem and requires consideration of all possible solutions. Emotion-focused coping requires management of the negative reactions to the problem. According to researchers, social support appears to be a valuable tool to cope with stressors. Adequate social support has been shown to decrease stress symptoms, strengthen physical health, lower blood pressure, and improve the immune system.

Personality differences also have a significant impact on responses to stress and coping. Individuals differ in their views on life. Some personality differences that have been studied in relation to the ways people react to stress include tendency to procrastinate, sense of humor, and hardiness. A person who is hardy engages actively in daily events, feels a sense of control over those events, and generally sees life events as challenges to be met.