# Chapter 51 Optimism, Pessimism, and Stress

L. Solberg Nes

Oslo University Hospital, Oslo, Norway

# Abstract

Dispositional optimists expect more good things to happen to them than bad. Optimism is linked with goal engagement and persistence, and optimists tend to adjust better to stressor exposure than pessimists. Dispositional optimism is also positively associated with approach coping strategies seeking to solve or manage stressors, and negatively associated with avoidance coping strategies. There is flexibility in this concept as optimists tend to choose coping strategies depending on the stressor and stressor controllability. In the context of stressor exposure, a solid link exists between dispositional optimism and psychological and physiological well-being. Some findings indicate short-term physiological costs for optimists in this process, potentially due to persistent goal engagement and approach coping. However, the short-term costs are expected to be outweighed by long-term benefits involving goal achievement and associated positive psychological and physiological well-being.