# Chapter 12 Life Events Scale

E. Wethington

Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA

# Abstract

There is convincing evidence that exposure to stress in daily life is related to physical and mental health. A life events scale is a comprehensive list of external events and situations (stressors) that are hypothesized to place demands that tend to exceed the capacity of the average person to adapt (Cohen et al.4). Difficulty in adaptation leads to physical and psychological changes or dysfunction, creating risk for disorders and disease. The naturalistic measurement of life events has a long history in health research, primarily in observational, nonexperimental, population-based descriptive studies. Life events scales have proliferated, applying different theories of why stress exposure affects health, and addressing different levels of analysis, from momentary exposure to stress during the day, to the accumulation of stressors and their impact across many years of life. Four types of stress measurement are described: major life events, chronic stressors, stress appraisal, and daily hassles, or events.