What happens when the Actual ≠ Ideal?

- How do recreationists deal with situations where their actual experience does not meet their prior expectations?
  - Overcrowding
  - Low Satisfaction
  - Recreational Conflicts
- They feel stress!

Stress

- **Stress**: is defined as an unavoidable negative person-environment relationship (Lazarus, 2001)

3 Types of Stress:

1. **Prior Harm**, damage realized from past experiences;
2. **Threat**, anticipated harm; and
3. **Challenge**, difficulties dealing with demands.

Causes of Stress: Low Satisfaction

- **Satisfaction**: is a positive or negative attitude formed after experiencing a situation

**Discrepancy Model of Satisfaction** says:

- Consumers have preexisting expectations, before they participate,
- They compare the performance to their expectations
- They ask if preexisting expectations were confirmed or disconfirmed, and then make a satisfaction judgment

Causes of Stress: Crowding

- Overcrowding causes feelings of unpleasantness
  - Loss of privacy
  - Loss of perceived control
  - Physiological arousal
  - Sensory overload

Causes of Stress: Recreation Conflict

- **Recreation Conflict** is defined as goal interference attributed to another’s behavior
- Occurs when the behavior of another group or individual causes dissatisfaction
Coping

- **Coping**: the process of altering our circumstances, or our interpretation of circumstances, to make them appear more favorable (Lazarus, 2001)

Coping Strategies

- **Problem-focused** (external), where an individual changes the person-environment relationship for the better
- **Emotion-focused** (internal), where an individual changes the way they interpret a situation to make it seem more favorable

“Both strategies are interdependent and work together, one supplementing the other in the overall coping process” (Lazarus, 2001).

Causes of Stress and Coping Mechanisms

- Recreation
- Conflict
- Crowding
- Anything Detracting or Dissatisfying

Cognitive Adjustments

- **Rationalization**: is defined as “a process whereby recreationists re-evaluate an undesirable situation in a more favorable light” (Hammit & Patterson, 1991)
  - “Everyone is surprised at the crowds launching on the Grand Canyon, but they quickly accept it and are overwhelmed by the scale of the rapids & the canyon scenery!”
- **Trade-off**: individual prioritizes certain key aspects of the experience and is willing to make concessions to preserve a higher order priority
- **Which coping method is chosen depends on the individual.**
  - personally, controllability, history of experience, place attachment, etc.

Substitution as a Coping Strategy

- **1) Location**: Spatial Displacement
  - Different location within a resource (intra-site)
  - Choose a completely different resource (inter-site)
- **2) Time**: Temporal Displacement
  - Recreating during times of non-peak use: different seasons, days of the week, time of day, etc.
- **3) Activity**
  - Substituting one activity for another
  - Less common than spatial or temporal displacement

Some combination of the above is typical, and choice once again depends on the characteristics of the individual.
### What if you’re really, really stressed?

- **Absolute Displacement**
  - Leaving and never coming back
  - Quitting an activity

- **Seek Environmental Change (Direct Action)**
  - Confrontation with offending group or individual
  - Complain to resource staff

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### Management Implications

- Hard to know if people are being displaced and how people are coping
- Some things we can “manage” & some are outside our control
- Set realistic visitor expectations
- Increased need for open communication between visitors and resource staff

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### Management Implications

- Probe to find out what is underlying reported “conflict”
- Who do you manage for: the sensitive few or the majority?
- Addition of temporal and further spatial dimensions to the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (Hells Canyon)
- Expect and plan for displacement (regional planning, increased use during non-peak times)