

# Buffering Stress with Optimism

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Everything from traffic to tests can cause us to “freak out,” yet some people naturally handle stress better than others. [Joëlle Jobin](#), 2012 APSSC Student Research Award winner, wanted to see if being an optimist or a pessimist could change the way stress affects individuals.

When we stress out, our bodies release cortisol, a steroid hormone from the adrenal gland. Too much cortisol can have an adverse effect. Jobin and [Carsten Wrosch](#), both from Concordia University in Montreal, Canada, tested the association among stress, cortisol, and the buffering effect of optimism. After conducting a longitudinal study of older adults, which examined between-person and within-person associations between daily stress and cortisol secretion, they found that pessimistic individuals tend to perceive higher levels of stress and that optimism did buffer the adverse effect of stress on cortisol. Even on days of elevated stress, optimistic older adults were protected from secreting elevated cortisol.

Watch Jobin describe her study and findings in this 2012 Convention Video Blog: