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Strategies Men Use to Cope with Stress Caused by Severe Obesity: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT This qualitative study sought to explore and describe the coping strategies obese men use, as well as the lived experience of being obese. A phenomenological approach, symbolic interactionism and life course perspectives were used as theoretical points of departure. Experiences of being obese were described through three individual, in-depth, unstructured interviews. Emotion-focused coping strategies like blaming, denial and reappraisal, as well as avoidance were used while problem-focused coping strategies consisted of physical activity, weight loss diets and wearing appropriate clothes. Cognitive appraisals gave rise to certain emotions and feelings that their self and well-being were at risk and need to be dealt with. Along the life course they developed a specific coping trajectory. Identification of coping strategies and better awareness of the lived experience of obese men may enhance the knowledge of professionals, family members as well as parents who need to support them. It also provided tools to help vulnerable obese people deal with the consequences of stigma associated with it.