Cue cards:

Definition of life changes – refers to events that necessitate a major transition in some aspects of our life (e.g. getting married or dealing with bereavement.) They have such a major impact on someone; they are sometimes referred to as critical life changes.

Recent research on life changes:

Micheal an Ben-Zur studied 130 men an women, half of whom had been recently divorced and half recently widowed. They looked at levels of life satisfaction. In the widowed group this was found to be higher before bereavment than after the loss. This isnt suprising , yet divorced individuals showed the oppossite pattern after separation from their partners.

Classic study of life changes:

Rahe et al used the SRRS to test Holmes and Rahe’s hypothesis that the number of life events a person experienced would be positively correlated with illness. Rahe et al, aimed in particular to study a ‘normal’ population distinct from the populations previously studied of individuals who were already ill in hospital.

A military version of the SRRS was given to all men aboard three US Navy Cruisers – a total of over 2700 men. The men filled the questionnaire in just before a tour of duty, noting all the life events experienced over the previous six months.

An illness score was calculated on the basis of the number, type and severity of all illnesses recorded during the tour of duty.

Using life changes to measure stress:

Holmes and Rahe developed the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS) based on 43 life events taken from an analysis of 5000 patient records. They enlisted 400 participants. The participants were asked to score each event in terms of how much readjustment would be required by the average person. Participants were asked to provide numerical figures for the readjustment, taking marriage as an arbitrary baseline value of 50. Scores for all participants were totalled and averaged to produce life change units for each life event.