

and eat well-balanced meals. Limit your intake of stimulants like coffee, colas and tea.

- ▲ Avoid smoking cigarettes or marijuana. Avoid using tranquilizers, sleeping pills.
- ▲ If your health allows, tense and then relax each part of your body from toes to head, one part at a time.
- ▲ Shake away tensions as you work by vigorously shaking each of your limbs.
- ▲ Take a break. Climb down from your tractor and do a favorite exercise.
- ▲ Take three deep breaths - slowly, easily. Let go of unnecessary stress.
- ▲ Stop to daydream for 10 minutes. Close your eyes and take a short mental vacation to a place you really enjoy. See the sights; hear the sounds; smell the smells. Enjoy. Then go back to work feeling refreshed.
- ▲ Think positive thoughts: "I will succeed."
- ▲ Look for the humor in everything you do.
- ▲ Balance your work and your play. Do both well.
- ▲ Find someone with whom you can talk about your worries and frustrations.
- ▲ Get help when you need it. There are times when all of us can benefit from professional help.
- ▲ Unwind before bedtime. Do stretching exercises. Listen to soothing music, practice relaxing deeply, and be thankful for any blessings received today. Then sleep well.

Farm family members can manage their stress well - even during planting and harvesting. The key is to be flexible and to maintain a balanced lifestyle. Make time daily to take care of yourself, for your work is vital to all of us.

To learn more about managing your stress, read and practice *The Quieting Reflex* by C.F. Stroebel (New York: G.P. Putman's Sons, 1982) or *The Relaxation Response* by H. Benson (New York, Avon, 1975).

Putting Knowledge to Work

Cooperative Extension Service
The University of Georgia College of Family and Consumer Sciences
College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences in cooperation with Georgia Counties

Released by Don Bower, Extension Human Development Specialist, College of Family and Consumer Sciences, The University of Georgia

Adapted from Farm Stress Series, Robert J. Fetsch, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Kentucky, 1984.

The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State University, The U.S. Department of Agriculture and Counties of the State Cooperating. The Cooperative Extension Service offers educational programs, assistance and material to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability. For large print, taped or braille editions of this publication, contact the author.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION ORGANIZATION

CHFD-E-33 HD-4 November, 1999

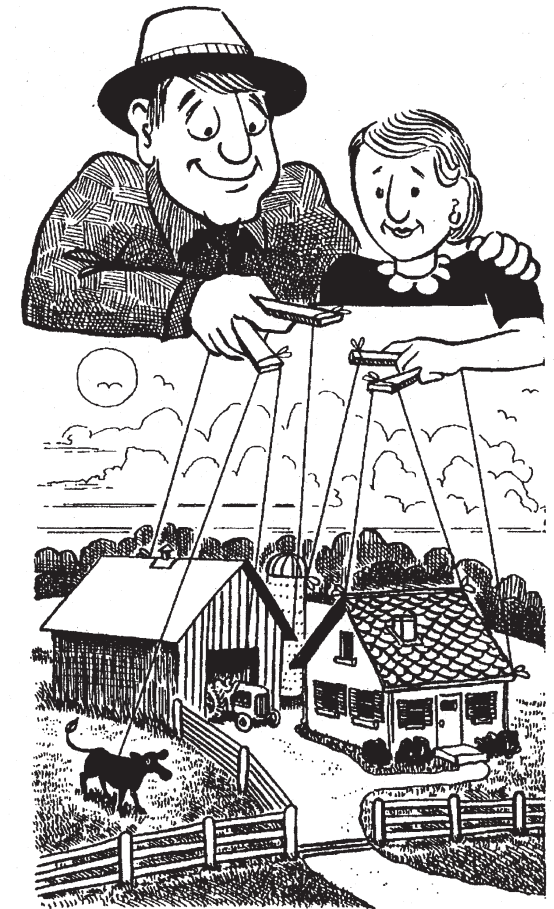
Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914. The University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

Gale Buchanan, Dean and Director



The University of Georgia
Cooperative Extension Service

Stress Management for Farmers



College of Family and Consumer Sciences and
College of Agricultural and Environmental
Sciences cooperating

Learning to control events, attitudes and responses day-in and day-out will help you manage those hectic, stressful times.

Perhaps you have noticed that some farmers crumble under the pressures of events that you find easy to handle. Or perhaps you have wondered how other farmers can go on in spite of the stress load they carry.

Why is it that some farmers can handle lots of stress and others very little? Researchers who have examined differences between successful and unsuccessful stress managers have identified three key factors. First, individuals vary in their capacity to tolerate stress. For example, prolonged exertion and fatigue that would be only mildly stressful to a young farmer may prove very difficult for an older farmer or someone with a heart defect. Emergencies, delays and other problems that a confident farmer takes in stride may be a stumbling block for one who feels inadequate. While part of an individual's stress tolerance is inborn, a crucial part depends on the quality of skills practiced. Learning to cope successfully with a stressor once makes it easier the next time.

A second factor is feeling in control. Successful stress managers know how to accept those stressors out of their control - the weather, their height, stock market fluctuations, - and how to worry effectively (problem-solve) about those within their control - neck tension, temper flare-ups, record keeping.

Finally, the attitudes, perceptions, and meanings that people assign to events determine a large part of their stress levels. A person has to perceive a situation as stressful or threatening in order to experience stress. If you think your dog is barking in the middle of the night because of a vandal, you will experience more stress than if you suspect a skunk has wandered into your yard.

Stress can be defined as energy in a blocked or chaotic state. It is an absence of calm, free flowing energy that promotes harmony and

balance in a person's body, psyche and soul. To achieve the relaxation response during peak farm stress seasons - planting and harvesting - takes discipline and daily practice at controlling events, attitudes and responses. Following are some techniques individuals may adopt to gain control.

Control events. To reduce the pile-up of too many stressful events at one time, farmers can control some situations.

- ▲ Plan ahead. Don't procrastinate. Replace worn machinery parts during the off season.
- ▲ Before the harvest discuss who can be available to run for parts, care for cattle, etc.
- ▲ Set priorities about what has to be done today and what can wait until tomorrow. Plan your time.
- ▲ Say no to extra commitments that you do not have time for.
- ▲ Simplify your life. If possible, reduce your financial dependence on others.
- ▲ Postpone stressful events within your control, such as elective surgery.

Control attitudes. How farm family members view situations is a key factor in creating or eliminating unwanted stress.

- ▲ See the big picture: "I'm glad that tire blew here rather than on that next hill."
- ▲ List all the stresses you now have. Change those you can; accept the rest.
- ▲ Shift from worrying to problem solving.
- ▲ Turn your crises into challenges.
- ▲ Notice what you have accomplished rather than what you failed to do.
- ▲ Set realistic goals and expectations daily. Give up trying to be perfect.

Control responses. The past is gone. The future is not here yet. Right now you have the choice to feel stressed or to feel relaxed. Start here.

- ▲ Relax. Whether you are walking, driving or phoning, do it slowly and relax. Keep only that muscle tension necessary to accomplish the task.
- ▲ Tune into your body. Notice any early signs of stress and let them go.
- ▲ Take care of your body. Exercise regularly

**WELL DEAR, TODAY I
UPDATED THE FARM RECORDS.
TOMORROW I'LL
FINISH CANNING!**

**GREAT! TODAY I REPAIRED
THE TRACTOR. TOMORROW
I'LL FINISH
BALING!**

