

# Handling **STRESS**: A Personal Approach

(And the cows really did get out as I wrote this article!)

By Janet Parsons

Once I was so stressed out that ... after waiting for a bus to pass, I pulled out to cross the Trans-Canada Highway with a load of grain and neglected to shift gears from 3rd to 5th. By the time I cleared the other side of the Highway, I heard car tires screeching. My mind had been on fifty other things and the result could have been fatal. It was then I realized how close I was to the edge.

That was a very long time ago and things have improved considerably since then, especially the way I handle stress.

## Crisis Stress

First, I'd like to consider crisis-type stress factors. As an example, my two teen-aged sons and I coach a softball team. I was going away for three days and the boys were to hold the practices on their own. Here's the rub - all the baseball equipment was left in the trunk of the car which I drove to the airport seventy miles from home.

This is the kind of situation that can create hard feelings. It happens and you really have no control over it. It's really no one's fault, but your adrenalin starts to pump and your temper starts to rise. This kind of incident may end up in a child being yelled at, others being blamed, a line of profanity where everyone runs for cover, or just plain feeling horrible about yourself for being so stupid.

[My son just came running in - "the cows are out." Someone left a gate unlatched. Gotta go!]

The older I get the easier it becomes to deal with this type of stress. You realize how much things said in haste can hurt and how long they're remembered, and how it's totally self-defeating to go on blaming yourself. I've learned to deal with this type of stress by planning and avoiding it, refusing to yell at my boys



(most of the time), and saying "okay, now what" and dealing with it.

[Actually, it's kind of fun when everyone gets together to chase the cows back in. There's a real sense of satisfaction when the last cow goes in and the gate is closed. Isn't that a better attitude than yelling, name calling, and blaming someone for something they didn't mean to do?]

## Housework

Since I run the farm, I spend most of my time outside and the problem of housework used to create major stress. Of course, no one wants to do housework, but everyone wants it done. Obviously, it should be shared. GOOD LUCK! I've tried everything. The only solution that works is for mother to do it. No! Hire a housekeeper.

My cleaning lady comes in for half a day each week and does cleaning, vacuuming, and the laundry, but no dishes. Over the years I've had her do cooking, baking, mending and gardening depending on how busy I was; she's a gem! Usually she cleans Monday. But if company is coming, she'll clean that

morning. I thoroughly enjoy having company, but as a busy person I appreciate a call so I can organize the day. Rose has been working for us for about twelve years and earns \$6.50 per hour. It works out to \$20 to \$30 per week.

By the way, I've heard women say they clean the house before the cleaning lady comes in. Usually, I have the wash well on the way and things put away, but not always. Sometimes the kitchen looks like a tornado just went through. What would you expect with three boys, their friends, a husband, a dog, and a mother working in the barn.

Rose is the housewife that farming women need. I don't hire her as much as I'd like, but enough to allow me to deal with the boy's activities, the farm business, and my outside contract work and appointments without stress choking me.

## Priorities

It all comes down to a matter of priorities. A few months ago, I attended a seminar dealing with stress and the one thing I found most interesting was what mattered to me. We were asked to list, in order of our own priorities, the sixteen things that contributed to a healthy living. My four top choices were family, work, financial security and creative outlet. When I look at how I approach life these priorities are really obvious. The point is that now that I have this list in mind, I can spend my time on what matters to me and not feel guilty. Also, I am much more understanding of people who demonstrate other priorities.

## Family

My first priority is my family. As most of you realize children create a mountain of stress with their demands and actions. My solution to this stress is to deal with it by planning. We have family meetings at least three times a year. And if some-

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