

Feeling Stressed? A Psychologist Offers Ways To Cope

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Lancaster Farming Staff
QUARRYVILLE (Lancaster Co.) — Stress is something everyone must face, no matter who you are, according to a licensed psychologist.

But a valuable tool to handle stress is to meet with others who experience the same kinds of stress and talk about ways to cope,

stress, looks out the window at his little block of blue sky and decides to end his career and become a farmer, perhaps to return to a "simpler" way of life. At the same time, a farmer in the Midwest, saddled by drought, walks out into the cornfields and, after looking up into the endless blue sky, realizes that if rain doesn't come soon, all is lost. The farmer thinks perhaps

short haul to reach the more important, all-encompassing long-term goals.

• Control. People who must endure stress need to avoid the fatalist attitude that forces them to believe all is lost. They must ensure themselves they are still in control. Stress affects people hardest when they think they have little or no control of a situation.

Wilikofsky examined some of the common stresses faced at work or at home, including:

• Disappointment. Everybody faces a letdown for something at one time or another. To deal with disappointment, it's better to step back and "take a larger perspective." That includes thinking about how truly miserable those in developing countries have it compared to the average daily U.S. worker. It's essential to have the right attitude and to be more assertive. "Start doing things," said

'Worry is like a rocking chair — it gives you something to do and doesn't get you anywhere.'

according to Dr. Adam S. Wilikofsky, assistant director, family and community medicine at Lancaster General Hospital.

Wilikofsky spoke about stress management to about 16 members of the Solanco Young Farmers Association last week at Solanco High School.

Groups such as the young farmers, which meet on a regular basis, are "invaluable" for dealing with stress, said Wilikofsky.

"It's good to have other people to talk to. It helps to talk about the problems," he said. "It gives you a sense that you're not alone."

Wilikofsky treats many professionals in his practice with the Lancaster Health Alliance. He has seen the mental and emotional deterioration that can occur to people who can't or won't find ways to deal successfully with stress.

The psychologist told the story of a New York City advertising executive who, burdened with

it's better to sell the farm and get an office job somewhere, perhaps in the city, where life *must* be better.

"It doesn't matter what you do, there's always going to be stress," said Wilikofsky.

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"three C's" of stress management and how people who are successful at managing stress learn to cope:

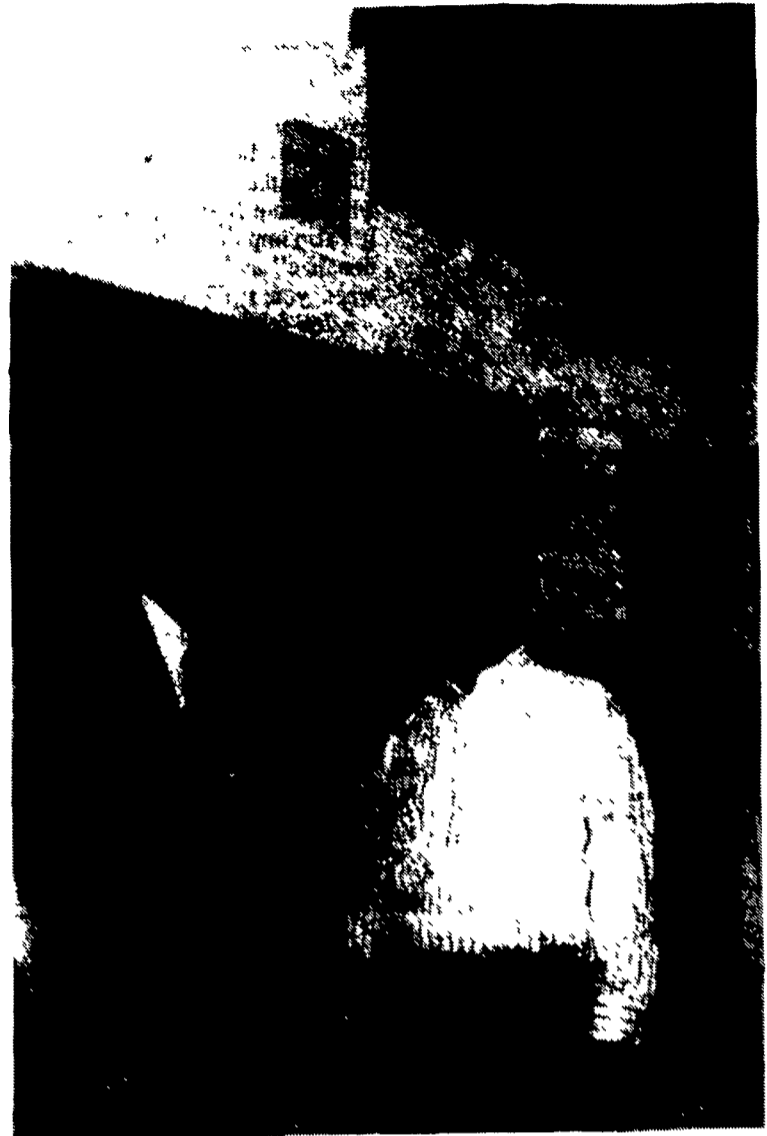
• Challenge. Those who can successfully deal with stress look at stressful situations not as difficulties, but as potential challenges.

• Commitment. Those who are successful look at the long-term picture and set long-term objectives. If stress occurs, it is something that must be endured on the

Wilikofsky, to "resolve the problem. Don't focus on the aggravation." Farmers must focus on the causes of the problem and not "blame ourselves." He said, "Figure out what you're going to do and start to do it."

• Change. This includes death of a loved one, loss of job, and the subsequent worries, anxiety, and

(Turn to Page C9)



A valuable tool is to meet with others who experience the same kinds of stress and talk about ways to cope, according to Dr. Adam S. Wilikofsky, left, assistant director, family and community medicine at Lancaster General Hospital. At right is Ronald Althoff, Solanco Young Farmer Association adviser.

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