



Views from VanDeWalle

Brandy VanDeWalle, Extension Educator in Fillmore/Clay Counties

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Coping with Stress During a Crisis

With the flooding and blizzard conditions affecting a large portion of the state, this week I looked up some Extension resources and decided to write some of the research ideas for dealing with stress and how to help the whole family cope. First of all, our Nebraska Extension publication, *Effective Management of Stress & Crisis* points out numerous tips that come from worldwide research on strong families. It involves research from more than 24,000 family members in 35 countries. While the publication identifies 18 ideas, I selected the top ten that interest me. For the remainder of the ideas, go online to the publication which can be accessed through our extension.unl.edu website and search for “Effective Management of Stress & Crisis.”

Ideas for coping with stress and crisis include:

- Look for something positive to focus and focus on that positive element in a difficult situation.
- Keep things in perspective. “These things too, shall pass.”
- Pull together rather than apart. Don’t see the problem as an individual’s problem but as a challenge for the whole family.
- Focus on what is most important and minimize fragmentation. Without focusing on the essentials, the details, details, details can get you edgy, even hysterical.
- Go to the flow to some degree. Sometimes you are relatively powerless in the face of crisis. At this point it can be useful to simply tell yourself to “let it go.”
- Know how to laugh and know how to cry, for both are essential to maintain an emotional balance in life.
- Create a life full of meaning and purpose. All people face severe crises in life. You will not be able to avoid these challenges. Rather, your aim can be to live a useful life of service to your community. This brings richness and dignity to your life, in spite of the troubles you endure.
- Realize that suffering can be a catalyst for positive growth. Crisis, by definition, is a difficult time in your life. However, it also can be a turning point, planting the seeds for a satisfying and successful future. This is hard to internalize but useful to remember.
- Identify spiritually with the grand procession of life: Through good times and bad, we, as individuals, come and go, but life from whence we all spring is eternal. There is something satisfying and soothing about that thought.
- Get help outside the nuclear family when needed. Seek help from extended family members, supportive friends, neighbors, colleagues, members of your religious community, professionals in the community, or others. In a manner of speaking, it takes a whole village to resolve a crisis.

While it might be “easier said than done” to follow the above strategies, giving every effort to embrace a positive approach to deal with a crisis will help you and your family more effectively handle the situation at hand. Disasters, whether natural or human-made leave today’s families facing difficult times. Our ranching and farming families have especially been impacted by the recent floods and blizzards. Let’s remember to pull together as a state and help our fellow Nebraskans through this difficult time, as the recovery and rebuilding process will take a long time.