

# Can you handle stress?

Physicians, counselors and teachers of stress seminars may help, but in the end, each individual has to work out a healthy way of life.

"You have charge of your own physical and mental health," says Dr. Leo Hawkins, extension human development specialist, North Carolina State University.

"People are already dealing with stress. It is just that they may not be handling the situation in the best possible manner," the extension specialist says.

Here are ways -- good and bad -- that people deal with stress. When faced with trying situations, some people:

- Sleep more.
- Try to get more exercise.
- Smoke more cigarettes.
- Go shopping.

--Organize a schedule for daily activities.

--Have a quiet time for meditation each day

--Make long-term plans.

--Find a new job.

--Eat more.

--Join a support group, civic club or church group.

--Try to avoid all stressful situations.

--Drop volunteer offices and duties in the community, church and other groups.

--Work to improve communication in the family or work group.

--Examine and perhaps change family expectations.

"Try to identify the ways in which you deal with stress. Are they as positive as they could be? It may help to talk over different approaches with the family or a friend," Dr. Hawkins says.

# Garden soil should be tested

As soon as the soil is dry enough, Tar Heel gardens should be soil tested to determine lime and fertilizer requirements. The ideal time for this chore was last fall, but it isn't too late.

Gardens that have been very productive or those that haven't been tested for soil pH and fertilizer needs and those that are most in need of a soil analysis.

Here are some suggestions from the N.C. Agricultural Extension Service on how to go about getting this task accomplished:

First, go to the agricultural extension office in your county or to a local garden supply store and pick up soil sample boxes and soil sample information sheets.

As soon as your garden is dry enough, collect soil samples at several locations

from the site. These samples should be taken from a depth of six to seven inches.

Place the samples in a clean bucket. Caution: detergent or residues of other materials in the bucket may contaminate the soil sample and result in misleading information from the soil analysis.

Mix the soil in the bucket thoroughly. This will give you a fairly representative sample of the garden itself. Take a couple of handfuls of this soil and place in the box. Carefully fill out the information sheet.

Mail the sample to the Agronomic Division, N.C. Department of Agriculture, Raleigh, N.C. 27611. The analysis will be made free of charge, and you will receive lime and fertilizer recommendation by mail.

# Tips for buying a new car

Buying a new car is an important investment. Here are several tips offered by the Better Business Bureau to help you make a smart buying decision.

• Get the facts on size and costs. Consider your needs first-not "wants". The full-size car costs more initially than the others. It costs more to operate and maintain. However, it can be more comfortable and carry 6 or more passengers.

The intermediate-size car is slightly smaller than its full-size cousin. It may seat five and costs a bit less to operate and maintain than a full-size.

Compact cars seat two to four fairly comfortably. The compacts are usually cheaper to operate, although maintenance runs about the same as for the other cars.

Factor in all costs and credits before buying. This includes trade-in, leased, and rental car factors.

• Shop for the best dealer. The dealer should be dependable. If you're in doubt, check the local Better Business Bureau for a reliability report.

• Check all options and warranties. Warranties must tell you what is covered, who covers it off how long, and what you must do to be satisfied if something goes wrong. Most warranties must be clearly labeled as full or limited.

Ask about options and their cost. These

include fabric sealers for upholstery, undercoating, rustproofing.

• Test drive the car. Put it through its paces.

• Negotiate the price. Check your bank's "Blue Book" for your old car's wholesale price; use it as a benchmark when considering a trade-in.

You may get a better deal on last year's model car. And you may get a better deal buying an in-stock car rather than ordering from the factory. Shop other dealers for the same model.

• Financing a new car can be done many ways: through the dealer or you bank; financing companies; insurance companies; credit unions. Find out who is loaning the money and what company receives the payments and what the loan will cost.

• Closing the deal. Don't sign any final papers until you make sure the car is what you want, the body isn't damaged, parts aren't missing. The dealer must sign that all pre-delivery services have been made. Have all warranties dated and signed.

• The final paper work includes a car title, insurance, registration certificate, license plates, city/county tax licenses, inspection stickers, sales tax on the vehicle. Find out the costs before buying.

# Farming can cause stress, too

If the stress and strain of everyday living on the farm has been getting to you, you may benefit from some coping strategies.

Dr. Leo Hawkins, extension human development specialist at North Carolina State University, has outlined the following three plans of action which researchers have been found help rural families cope with stress.

--Economic approaches: Cut back on farm operations. Plan for some family member to work off the farm. Do some pre-problem planning. This represents and attempt to take some of the surprise out of crises on the farm. Buy and borrow wisely.

--Health habits: Get enough sleep. Take some regular exercise in addition to work.

Take time to eat. Choose a hobby different from activities done at work. Avoid self-medication.

--Emotional strategies: Talk over worries. Seek help with persistent guilt, resentment, anger or fear. When really angry, write a five-minute letter, read it and burn it. Be a worrier, but do it constructively. Instead of saying "If only I had sold before," try "If this happens again, how will I handle it?" Or "What can I do to prevent this kind of problem?"

Other suggestions include planning for a personal quiet time each day, and escaping for a while through hobbies or outside interests. "Don't let the boredom stress you, especially during long winter months," Dr. Hawkins says.

# SAVING BABIES...

Recording star Evelyn King:

"There is no greater joy than to have a healthy, beautiful baby. But not all babies are so fortunate — 250,000 infants are born with physical or mental birth defects each year. The March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation works to save babies."



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