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NF00-445 Creating a Strong Family: Successful Management of Stress and Crisis

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NebFact



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Creating a Strong Family **Successful Management of Stress and Crisis**

John DeFrain, Extension Specialist, Family and Community Development

Research on strong families across the country and around the world reveals useful approaches to dealing with stress and crises in one's life in a positive manner. Here are some approaches your family can use during difficult times.

- Look for something positive, and focus on that positive element in a difficult situation.
- Pull together rather than apart. Don't see the problem as an individual's problem but as a challenge for the whole family.
- 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. "It takes a whole village to resolve a crisis."
- Create open channels of communication. Challenges are not met when communication shuts down.
- Keep things in perspective. "These things, too, shall pass."
- Adopt new roles in a flexible manner. Crises often demand that you learn new approaches to life and take on different responsibilities.
- Focus on what is most important and minimize fragmentation. Without focusing on the essentials, the details, details, details can get you edgy, even hysterical.

This is one of a series of eight NebFacts, including two publications which introduce the series and provide a broader perspective.

- [What Is a Strong Family, Anyway?](#), NF00-439
- [Qualities of Strong Families](#), NF00-446
- [Appreciation and Affection: Developing an Emotional Bond](#), NF00-440
- [Commitment: The Family Comes First](#),

- Give up on worrying or put your cares in a box. Worrying usually causes people more misery than the actual event they are worrying about. Sometimes it's best to stuff the worry down or resolve to worry 10 minutes a day and then forget it. The mind simply has to rest.
- Eat well, exercise, love each other and get adequate sleep. Often human beings forget that they are biological beings, not unlike kindergartners. We all need a good lunch, and we need to play. We need to have our hair stroked, and we need a good nap.
- 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 a richness and dignity to your life, in spite of the troubles you endure.
- Actively meet your challenges head-on. Disaster in life does not go away when you look in another direction. But, it is also helpful sometimes to withdraw for a time and replenish yourself.
- Go with 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."
- Prepare in advance for the challenges in life. Healthy family relationships are like an ample bank balance: If you have kept your relational accounts in order, you will be able to weather life's most difficult storms. Together.
- Know how to laugh and know how to cry, for both are essential if you are to maintain an emotional balance in life.
- Do not blame others for your fate but work with others to build a more satisfying world for all.
- Take life's challenges one day at a time. In especially tight situations, you sometimes need to take things one hour at a time or perhaps one minute at a time.
- 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.

NF00-441

- [Positive Communication: Smoothing Out the Bumps in Family Life](#), NF00-442
- [Enjoyable Time Together: A Journey of Happy Memories](#), NF00-443
- [Spiritual Well-Being: Sacred Connections](#), NF00-444
- [Successful Management of Stress and Crisis](#), NF00-445

The above ideas are adapted from the book *Marriage and the Family: Diversity and Strengths*, 3rd ed., by David H. Olson and John DeFrain. The book was copyrighted and published in 2000 by Mayfield Publishing Co., Mountain View, California.

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