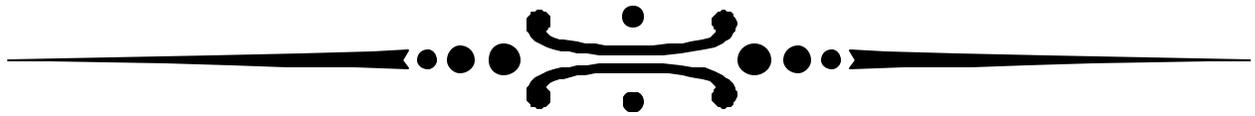


**Quality of Rural Life**  
**Managing Farm Stress Workshop**  
**Participant's Workbook**

*Sponsored By: The PEI Federation of Agriculture's Farm Health and Safety Program, the Canada/PEI Farm Business Management Agreement & the Credit Unions of Prince Edward Island*

*Date: May, 2001*



*If I Had My Life to Live Over*

*“ .... I'd like to make more mistakes next time. I'd relax. I would limber up. I would be sillier than I have been on this trip. I would take fewer things seriously. I would take more chances. I would climb more mountains and swim more rivers...I would perhaps have more actual troubles, but I'd have fewer imaginary ones....”*

*“ .... You see, I'm one of those people who live sensibly and sanely every hour after hour, day after day. Oh, I've had my moments, and if it had to be done again, I'd have more of them. In fact, I'd try not to have anything else. Just moments, one after another, instead of living so many years ahead of each day. I've been one of those persons who never goes anywhere without a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a raincoat and a parachute...”*

*“ .... If I had to do it over again, I would travel lighter than I have. If I had my life to live over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I would go to more dances. I would ride more merry-go-rounds. I would pick more daisies....”*

*Relax*

*By Nadine Stair 86 years old*

## **Improving the Quality of Rural Life in PEI**

Over the past decade the farming community in PEI, and across the country generally, has been experiencing a high level of uncertainty, frustration and challenge. Some of the challenges facing farmers include such things as isolation- many farmers continue to work alone-, the loss of rural communities and rural services, the lack of younger people moving into the industry, the difficulty with costs, commodity prices and markets, emerging environmental concerns, and inconsistent and/ or confusing governmental direction, leadership and policy.

In short, farm families are working in a social and economic environment that is more challenging than ever before, and these pressures can cause a high degree of stress within many farm families. Families living with this level of constant stress can experience a broad range of physical, emotional and behavioural symptoms. This could include things such as; headaches, heart and digestive problems, relationship problems, inter-generational conflicts, substance abuse, increased tensions and violence in the home, and even suicide.

Looking for ways to deal with farm stress can have its own challenges. The farming community generally, and the farm family in particular, tend to have a culture which can make it difficult for an individual to acknowledge their needs, and seek out services and supports. Farmers have a strong tradition of being independent and working on their own for the most part. When this element is combined with the natural human tendency not to openly talk about “our problems”, and our need for help and support, many farm families do not often readily seek out help and support in a timely way.

The PEI Federation of Agriculture has become much more aware of the nature and extent of farm stress within farm families across the Island. Over the past year, it has been searching out ways in which it can provide information and support to families. It wants to start addressing some of the issues that can result in an improved quality of life for many rural farm families. The Farm Stress Workshop is one of the programs the Federation will be offering as part of this initiative.

## **Farm Stress Workshop**

Dealing with farm stress effectively is a process. Each person needs to begin to look at how stressful events/issues affect him/her as an individual, and begin to take steps to protect himself/herself from the negative impacts from stress. This Farm Stress Workshop is intended as one step in beginning to help farm families to understand what stress is, how it can impact us and our families, and to learn some new ways to handle stress better.

### **Workshop Objectives:**

#### **# Awareness**

- < Information - Education
- < Discussion - Reflection

#### **# Acceptance**

- < Putting Issues in Context
- < Being Realistic

#### **# Coping**

- < How I Respond
- < Striking a Balance

#### **# Action**

- < Making a Commitment
- < Creating a Plan
- < Follow up





## Defining Stress

### Stress ....

- < It is not a four letter word.
- < It is much maligned and misunderstood.
- < It can either be harmful or beneficial; it is not good or bad in itself.
- < It's a reaction to an event or events; and it's the body's response to any demanding circumstance that excites, frightens, irritates, or confuses us.
- < It's impact on us can show up in a variety of physical, mental and/or emotional symptoms.
- < It is different for everyone; it is an individual reaction.
- < An event can be a positive stress for one person, and a negative one for another.
- < It is not something that we can avoid entirely ... we cannot live without stress.
- < It can serve a useful purpose by preparing us to handle new and different situations.
- < It motivates us to act.
- < It is possible to learn how stress affects each one of us, and it is possible for us to develop a personal strategy to deal with negative stress.

## RESPONDING TO STRESS

Stress is our response to anything that threatens our survival. The survival can be physical, emotional, financial, or any kind of survival that's important to us. However, not all stress is bad. When we are excited about something, we feel anticipation, and this helps us get mentally and physically ready for the task. This is called Eustress, and it energizes us. It's what keeps us going during seeding or harvesting. But when we suffer from too much stress, and particularly if it is over a long period of time, this is called distress. Prolonged distress can result in severe physical and/or emotional problems. In many rural areas, a high percentage of visits to family physicians are due to stress related illnesses.

## WHAT CAUSES RURAL STRESS?

Many things. By the very nature of farm work, a lot of our daily lives are not under our control; changes in the weather, market prices or interest rates are things that people can't control. The equipment can break down at any time. For those who live in town, stress is caused by the loss of business and the migration of people from rural to urban environments. As people leave the rural areas, schools close and children have to be bussed greater distances to attend school. This is stressful for them and for their parents. All these things are called stressors. It is important to sort out which stressors you have control over and which ones you do not. It is sometimes helpful to sit down and make two columns on a piece of paper. On one side put "Stressors I have control over" and on the other side put "stressors I have no control over". This simple exercise can be very important in helping you sort out the two.

Sometimes people have to make choices between two things that are equally good and bad. For instance, for a farmer, planting large acres of potatoes can seem attractive; however, the markets and prices can be unpredictable, and there are more and more environmental concerns. Moving to more diversification can help this, but it has its downside as well. Most of the options and choices faced by farmers have their share of advantages and disadvantages. Dealing with all this is stressful.

A farmer who is facing financial difficulties, may have to choose between selling land or transferring land back to the creditor. Either choice can be a negative experience, and serves as another example of a stressor.

Things that are out of our control, and which last a long period of time, create the most stressful situations.

**The Impact of Stress**

**The Stressful Event or Situation**

**Overwork  
&  
Fatigue**

**Fear  
&  
Hate**

**Exposure  
&  
Injury**

**Hurry  
&  
Tension**

**Expectations  
&  
Pressures**

**When These Pressures Are Threatening**



**The Body Rushes to Protect Itself by Turning on the Chemical “Juices” and Prepares to Defend Itself**

**The Body “Fights” Against the Stressors**



**Continual Fighting Against the Stressors Eventually Produces Exhaustion. When the Body Can No Longer Cope it Begins to Breakdown.**

**When this State is Prolonged - the Result is**



<b>Physical Problems</b>	<b>Emotional Problems</b>	<b>Behavioural Problems</b>
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## Activity #1 - A Farm Stress Assessment Inventory

The following stressors were identified as being common for farm people. Use this inventory to help you become more aware of your stressors. You can then categorize those in the 4 to 5 range according to the following headings: **1. Financial 2. Weather 3. Work overload 4. Social 5. Hassles. 6. Worry** Once you have done this, prioritize which ones you want to work on first, and with whom. It may be helpful to discuss your results with your partner and/or family.

**Read each of the following examples of stressors, and indicate what level of stress this issue has for you by circling the appropriate number. ( # 1 = low stress and # 5 = high stress )**

- |     |  |           |
|-----|--|-----------|
| 1.  | Sudden and significant increase in debt load.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2.  | Significant production loss due to disease or pests.                                   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3.  | Insufficient regular cash flow to meet financial obligations or for daily necessities. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4.  | Delay in planting or harvesting due to weather.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5.  | Media distortions of the farm situation.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6.  | Low commodity prices.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7.  | Significant changes in type or size of farming operation.                              | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8.  | Meeting with a loan officer for an additional loan.                                    | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9.  | Purchase of major machinery, facility, land or livestock.                              | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10. | Not being considered as part of the farm business by others.                           | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 11. | Taking an off-the-farm job to meet expenses.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 12. | Prolonged bad weather.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 13. | Problems with weeds or insects.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 14. | Machinery breakdown at a critical time.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 15. | Not enough time to spend with spouse.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 16. | Crop loss due to weather, hail, not enough rain, excessive rain, frost, etc.           | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 17. | Personal illness during planting or harvesting.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 18. | Deciding when to sell.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 19. | Rising expenses.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 20. | Government policies and regulations  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 21. | Concerns about the continued financial viability of the farm.                          | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 22. | Having a loan request turned down.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 23. | Farming-related accident.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 24. | Government "free trade" policies.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 25. | Government "cheap food" policies.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 26. | Metric conversion.   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 27. | Breeding or reproductive difficulties with livestock.                                  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 28. | No farm help or loss of help when needed.  | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 29. | Need to learn and adjust to new government regulations and policies.                   | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 30. | Spouse doesn't have enough time to help with child rearing.                            | 1 2 3 4 5 |

- |     |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 31. | Increased work load at peak times.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. | Unplanned interruptions.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33. | Use of hazardous chemicals on the farm.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34. | Dealing with salespeople.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35. | Long work hours.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 36. | Few vacations away from the farm.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 37. | Concerns or worries about the unpredictability of the weather.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 38. | Feeling isolated on the farm.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 39. | Having to travel long distances for services, shopping and health care.                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 40. | Pressures in having too much to do in too little time.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 41. | Keeping up with new technology and products.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 42. | Worrying about market conditions.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 43. | Having to make decisions without all the necessary information.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 44. | Being expected to work on the farm and manage the house and family.                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 45. | Worrying about owing money.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 46. | Worrying about keeping the farm in the family.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 47. | Not seeing enough people.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 48. | Not having enough money or time for entertainment /recreation.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 49. | Death of a parent or member of immediate family.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 50. | Death of a friend.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 51. | Problems in balancing work and family responsibilities.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 52. | Problems in farm operating agreement with relatives.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 53. | Divorce or marital separation.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 54. | Problems with a partnership  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 55. | Daughter or son leaving home.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 56. | Trouble with parents or in-laws.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 57. | Conflict with spouse over spending priorities.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 58. | Major decisions being made without my knowledge or input.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 59. | Having to wear too many hats (e.g. farmer, spouse, father, mother<br>housekeeper, business person, etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 60. | Surface-rights negotiations.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 61. | Other recent events which have had an impact on your life. List<br>and rate.                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
- 

This Farm Stress Inventory was created by James & Lilly Walker - and was taken from a July 1995 Newsletter from the Centre for Agricultural Medicine - University of Saskatchewan.

## Activity #2 - Identifying Common Farm Related Stressors

Once you have completed the Farm Stress Inventory, take a few minutes and using the space below, write down the five most stressful situations for you.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Once you have had a chance to complete your list, you will be invited to “partner up” with one of your workshop participants to briefly discuss the stressors. Did you identify similar things ? Were there any differences in your perceptions ?

## Stress Warning Signals

Are any of the following familiar to you? Check the ones you experience when you are under stress. These can be the warning signs.

### PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

- |   |                    |   |                                 |
|---|--------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| ' | Headaches          | ' | Back pain                       |
| ' | Indigestion        | ' | Tightness in neck and shoulders |
| ' | Stomach aches      | ' | Racing heart                    |
| ' | Sweaty palms       | ' | Fatigue & tiredness             |
| ' | Sleep difficulties | ' | Ringing in ears                 |

### BEHAVIOURAL SYMPTOMS

- |   |                              |   |                               |
|---|------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| ' | Excess smoking               | ' | Grinding of teeth at night    |
| ' | Bossiness                    | ' | Overuse of alcohol            |
| ' | Carelessness or recklessness | ' | Compulsive eating             |
| ' | Critical attitude            | ' | Inability to get things done. |

### EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS

- |   |                                    |   |                                |
|---|------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| ' | Crying                             | ' | Overwhelming sense of pressure |
| ' | Nervousness, anxiety               | ' | Anger                          |
| ' | Boredom - no meaning to things     | ' | Loneliness                     |
| ' | Edginess - ready to explode        | ' | Unhappiness - depression       |
| ' | Feeling powerless to change things | ' | Easily upset                   |

### COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS

- |   |                          |   |                             |
|---|--------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| ' | Trouble thinking clearly | ' | Inability to make decisions |
| ' | Forgetfulness            | ' | Thoughts of running away    |
| ' | Lack of creativity       | ' | Constant worry              |
| ' | Memory loss              | ' | Loss of sense of humour     |

## How well do you manage stress?

Scan the following questions quickly and see how you would respond.

YES	NO	
<b><i>Awareness Skills</i></b>		
"	"	Can you name three situations that cause stress in your life?
"	"	Can you list three symptoms (physical, emotional or behavioural) that you suffer when you are under stress?
<b><i>Acceptance Skills</i></b>		
"	"	Are you able to maintain a positive or neutral attitude and keep from getting upset over little things?
"	"	Can you sometimes talk yourself out of feeling stressed?
<b><i>Coping Skills</i></b>		
"	"	Do you know (and use) relaxation techniques like deep breathing or mediation?
"	"	When you feel stressed, do you ever use exercise to get rid of the feeling?
<b><i>Action Skills</i></b>		
"	"	Do you make a list and prioritize tasks to keep yourself from feeling too rushed?
"	"	Are you able to easily express your feelings and communicate effectively when conflict arises?

How did you do? Even if you answered “yes” to most of the questions, there is often a big difference between knowing what to do, and doing it. This workshop will help you to learn some new strategies, and develop a plan to put these into practise.

## COPING WITH STRESS

Coping with stress involves breaking the stress cycle. One can do this by working through the following steps;

1. **Identify the source of stress.** This can be done by taking the time to “step back” and look at what is going in your life, what are the things that you are most concerned or worried about ? What are you finding stressful?
2. **Examine your response to the situation.** How are you responding in terms of your physical, emotional and behavioural reactions ?
3. **Identify the coping skills that are available.** What are some of the ways in which you can respond to help you cope with the stress in a better, healthier way ?

Coping skills can include learning to take steps in four areas of our lives;

- , our mental approach or attitude,
- , looking after our physical well-being,
- , our need for emotional/social support,
- , and our spiritual “balance”.

## **A. Mental Attitude and Approach**

**“Our life is what our thoughts make it.”**

How we look at problems can determine both the psychological and physiological impact of the situation. By choosing to view losses, hurts, frustrations, and stressful life changes with less doom and gloom, and not as the end of the world, we control their power to do us damage. There are things that we can do in our minds that help us to put the situation in perspective, be more realistic, and help us develop a more positive attitude; it can help us to be more accepting of the situation.

Our thoughts are more powerful than reality itself. They are the lens through which we see the world. Our interpretation determines how we feel and act. Often our thoughts are based on highly irrational ideas, which cause us to feel anxious, depressed, angry, guilty, or worthless. We can learn ways of disrupting a negative train of thought so that our response to life's challenges are healthy and productive. This stage may involve efforts to;

### **Keep Fears in Perspective:**

- < Has this happened before?
- < What can I learn from this ?
- < What's the worst possible outcome?
- < What else can I do?
- < What advice would I give in this situation?
- < In a year's time, will I even remember this?

### **Use Positive Self-dialogue:**

- < It's a Learning Experience.
- < Calm Down.
- < Someday We'll Have a Good Laugh Over This.
- < There Is No Place to Go But Up.
- < Every Cloud Has a Silver Lining

## **B. Physical Well Being:**

There are things that we can do for and with our bodies. This includes making sure that we take good care of our bodies as well as using physical techniques to help get rid of stress. Some of the self-care habits that we need to pay more attention to include;

### **Diet**

- < Eat a healthy breakfast
- < Maintain a low fat, low sugar diet
- < Restrict alcohol intake
- < Refrain from, or reduce the level of, tobacco use

### **Rest**

- < Arrange a quiet time each day
- < Engage in relaxation exercises before bed
- < Get a good night's sleep

### **Exercise**

- < Engage in 20 minutes of aerobic exercise at least 3 times a week
- < Participate in a game or sport on a regular basis
- < Walk as much as possible

## Relaxation Exercises

One of the main ways of dealing with stress is to teach ourselves to relax; there are three main ways to do this:

- 1. Deep breathing.** Sit down, get into a comfortable position, and place your hands on your stomach. Breathe in slowly, counting to 10, with your abdomen not your chest moving out. Hold your breath for a count of 5 and then release it slowly, again counting to 10. Do this 10 times.
- 2. Muscle relaxation.** Beginning with your toes, tighten each muscle group in your body, hold it for a few moments and then release it rapidly. So, for instance, curl your toes up and hold it for a few moments and rapidly release them. Then tighten the muscles of the calves of your legs. Hold and then let go. Do the same with your thighs, buttocks, abdomen, fists, arms, shoulders, neck, and face muscles. When you are finished, scan your body in your mind and if there is any place still tense, focus on that muscle and tighten and loosen it a few times until the tension is gone.
- 3. Visual imagery.** Close your eyes, get comfortable and imagine the scene, the smell, the sounds, even the feel of it. Stay with this image for as long as you can. When you are ready to leave, tell yourself that you are leaving now but you can come back whenever you want. Slowly open your eyes.

Relaxation, deep breathing and visual imagery all do the same thing; they stop the cycle of toxins being released into our body as a result of stress. When the cycle is stopped, our body returns to normal balance, our minds are better able to think clearly, and our bodies to are able to function in a much healthier manner.

## Basic Prevention

Good stress prevention practices are really common sense. Be sure you allow yourself enough rest time. If you can't sleep, lay down in a darkened room or practice some relaxation techniques; this is better than watching TV, pacing the room, or trying to figure out the bills in the middle of the night. Eating well and nutritiously is important. Make sure you have a balanced diet and not too many fast foods, fatty foods and sweets. This way your body will have the energy resources it needs to tackle the problems at hand.

Physical exercise is one of the most important tools in managing stress. Like the relaxation techniques, exercise engages the body in a way that stops the vicious cycle of stress toxins being released in your body. Exercise increases the metabolism allowing stress toxins to be broken down and eliminated. Exercise also induces the production of chemicals in your brain that elevate your mood and relax you, naturally, without pills.



## C. Emotional and Social Support:

*“I felt I was in a rut and couldn’t get out. Half of me didn’t want to open up to anyone. I think I was afraid people would think I wasn’t able to solve my problems. The other half of me desperately needed someone to talk to and help me work out some ways to deal with things better. When I finally opened up, I felt like a weight had been taken off my shoulders.”*

Stress is part of everyday life, and in most cases we can resolve the problems. In a crisis, however, the emotions and problems can be so overwhelming that we cannot cope. It is during these times that the support of friends, family and acquaintances is most needed. Support systems play an important role in our lives, affecting both our physical and mental well-being. Having a strong support system is particularly important during a crisis.

What we need to do most of all is talk to each other about what is making us feel stressed. It is essential that we talk to our partner, our family, and our neighbours. Talking to your partner will engage him or her in helping to share the responsibility you are feeling, and it may help to relieve some of the stress related symptoms you may be experiencing ( e.g. irritability, insomnia ). In problem solving two heads are better than one, and together you may find some solutions that you would not have identified on your own. It’s important to include children, and other members of your family, in these discussions at some point. If family members are aware of what you are trying to cope with, they can be helpful and supportive in a number of ways.

Talking to your neighbours can be extremely helpful as well. Things like farm commodity discussion groups, self-help groups, and community support groups not only help to share problems, but can also be a good source to find new solutions. Many farm families have often experienced the same types of problems. They may know the system better than you do, and they may have certain knowledge and/or skills ( i.e. negotiating skills ) that you need to know; and they may also know people or resources that could be helpful to you. Family members, friends, community members, and neighbours help us adjust to whatever changes, losses, and problems we encounter.

While the need for a close support system is important, many families also have difficulty in acknowledging problems, and accepting assistance from others. They feel accepting help is evidence that they are unable to solve their problems, and this plays on their sense of pride, self-confidence and credibility.

Rural stress is here to stay. It can either control us or we can control it. Through good prevention, management, and the knowledge and use of resources, we can be the ones in control.

## Identifying Your Social Support System

To identify the people in your support system, imagine yourself at the centre of a dart board with three circles:

- (1) The circle immediately surrounding you includes those people to whom you feel closest-family, close friends. You feel comfortable confiding in them, and you depend on them to be there when you need them.
- (2) The next larger circle includes those people with whom you are less intimate but who share your day-to-day life; this group could include church members, neighbours, and other friends.
- (3) The outermost circle includes acquaintances-community members such as the feed store dealer, the milk truck driver, and the veterinarian. You are not personally involved with these people, but you perceive them to be helpful.

### **Activity: Identifying your Support System**

## **D. Spiritual Balance:**

Tending to our spiritual lives is an important way of dealing with stress, particularly if you experience a sense of a loss of direction or meaning. One's religious beliefs can be an important source of support in dealing with stress. A person's spiritual balance is not only nourished by one's formal religion, but may also include any other pursuit that helps us slow down and become more aware of our inner selves. This may include things like self-reflection, meditation, and appreciating nature.

### **Developing a "Stress-resistant" Personality**

In summary, if we wish to achieve a more "stress resistant" personality, we need to;

- < Set Realistic Goals and Expectations
- < Build a Time for Leisure Activities
- < Establish an Exercise Routine
- < See Problems as Challenges
- < Connect Yourself to a Social Support Network
- < Share Responsibility - Seek Help

# Managing Your Stress

## Developing a SMART Action Plan

In an effort to begin to put into practice some of the things you have learned through this workshop, it is useful to develop an action or follow up plan. Sometimes it is useful to actually develop a written plan which you can refer to each day/week to monitor your progress. Start with a bite-sized realistic goal, something that you will be able to accomplish in the next several weeks. Try putting your skills to work using a SMART plan like the following:

**Specific:** Set a concrete goal that addresses behaviour and results, not the emotions.  
An example; **FOR THE NEXT MONTH, WHEN I FEEL STRESSED, I WILL USE EXERCISE OR RELAXATION TO COPE.**

**Measurable:** State your goal in a way that you can easily measure your progress. An example; **MY GOAL IS TO REDUCE THE OCCASIONS THAT I FEEL STRESSED TO FEWER THAN ONE A DAY.**

**Agreed upon:** Don't do it alone; ask others to help and support you. An Example: **MY FAMILY KNOWS THAT STRESS MANAGEMENT IS IMPORTANT AND WILL ALLOW ME TO TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO RELAX MYSELF WHEN I NEED TO.**

**Rewarding:** Behaviour change should be as much fun as possible; decide how you will reward yourself. An Example: **FOR EACH WEEK THAT I REACH MY STRESS MANAGEMENT GOAL, I WILL REWARD MYSELF WITH ONE EVENING FOR MYSELF, DOING WHAT I WANT TO DO.**

**Trackable:** Keep track of you progress in a visible way; this helps keep you from getting discouraged by showing your approach toward the goal.  
An Example: **I WILL KEEP A DAILY STRESS LOG SHOWING MY STRESSORS, MY RESPONSE, AND HOW I HANDLED IT.**

## LAUGHTER

Laughter is one ingredient to relaxation and well-being that is free, low-cal, and available without a prescription.

Every time you laugh:

- , 17 muscles in your face relax
- , circulation of the blood is improved
- , respiration is increased
- , the muscles in your abdomen are massaged
- , endorphins - the brain's natural pain killers are stimulated

***In other words, laughter makes you feel good!!***



## Community Mental Health Resources

### **West Prince:**

Out-Patient Mental Health Program- O'Leary Hospital - 859-8700

### **East Prince:**

Community Mental Health - Regional Health Centre - Summerside - 888-8380

Prince County Hospital:

Psychiatric Unit: 432-2549

Dr. Chris Stewart: 888-3800

### **Queens County:**

Community Mental Health: Richmond Centre - 368-4430  
McGill Centre - 368-4911

Pownal House - 894-8591 (formerly Catholic Family Services Bureau)

Queen Elizabeth Hospital: Psychiatric Unit - 894-2022

Dr. Ben Spears - 628-6258

### **Southern Kings:**

Community Mental Health - 838-0777

### **Eastern Kings:**

Mental Health - Souris Hospital - 838-0777

Canadian Mental Health Association - 687-7150

Self-Help Clearinghouse - 628-1648

