

It is more than finances at risk...it is also our families!

The headlines shout about it every day, radio and TV express doom and gloom, and even comic strips are using the economy as a topic. No one is immune and **dairy farm families** could be more at risk than anyone. Many have come to rely on the “off the farm” job to sustain a financial balance. The news of being laid off could have come at the same time as the last milk check. It is a life defining moment when it becomes obvious that both the farm and the family are in turmoil. These kinds of tensions leave a mark on kids. As a parent, you may find it hard to describe what is happening...but you **MUST!** It is the teachable moment!

Following is advice you might find helpful.....

***Avoid talking in doomsday terms.** Younger children can adapt to not having material things, but if they feel the family is falling apart, they will easily lose a sense of security. Older siblings will understand the crisis, but could also form a negative attitude towards agriculture.

***Be honest.** Discuss solutions and the fact that change is a part of life. Research shows that keeping family communication open is very important.

***Involve adolescents.** Help them to figure out ways they can contribute. Teach some facts about fiscal responsibility and saving money. Asking them for an opinion could make a big difference in how they react.

***Stay connected with your community.** A strong social network is a valuable asset. By doing this, you may also be preserving some of those family rituals that bind you together.

***Be careful with your words.** Let kids know that no one in the family is to blame. Mother Nature and Uncle Sam are the family relatives to discuss.

***Watch each other.** Be sensitive to how stress is being handled. Coping during tough times is a challenge, but one that can strengthen the dairy farm family unit in more ways than we ever thought possible!