

# EQ 1989 - SC County Personal tremors continue for many

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**P**EOPLE MAY BE sick to death of hearing and talking about the earthquake, but that doesn't mean they're going to stop.

Licensed marriage, family and child counselor and stress specialist Wayne Moses says the Oct. 17 earthquake is still a big part of local conversations.

"Even though many are at a place where they 'don't want to hear or talk about it anymore,' I consistently hear people weaving the disaster into their conversations with present tense words," he said. "The shaking within the depths of our being continues."

Even though it feels abnormal, reliving and rehashing the disaster dozens of times is normal and healthy. Some need to do it a dozen times, others may need a hundred reruns of the episodes that happened in October before the impact begins to diminish. There is no correct way or certain time limit, he says, to get over the trauma.

"Everyone is still experiencing, and will continue to struggle through the aftermath of the disaster for a very long time," he said. "...Normal recovery may be as varied as the victims involved... It may take up to six months to a year (and maybe longer) to recover, even though our perceptions and priorities may be altered."

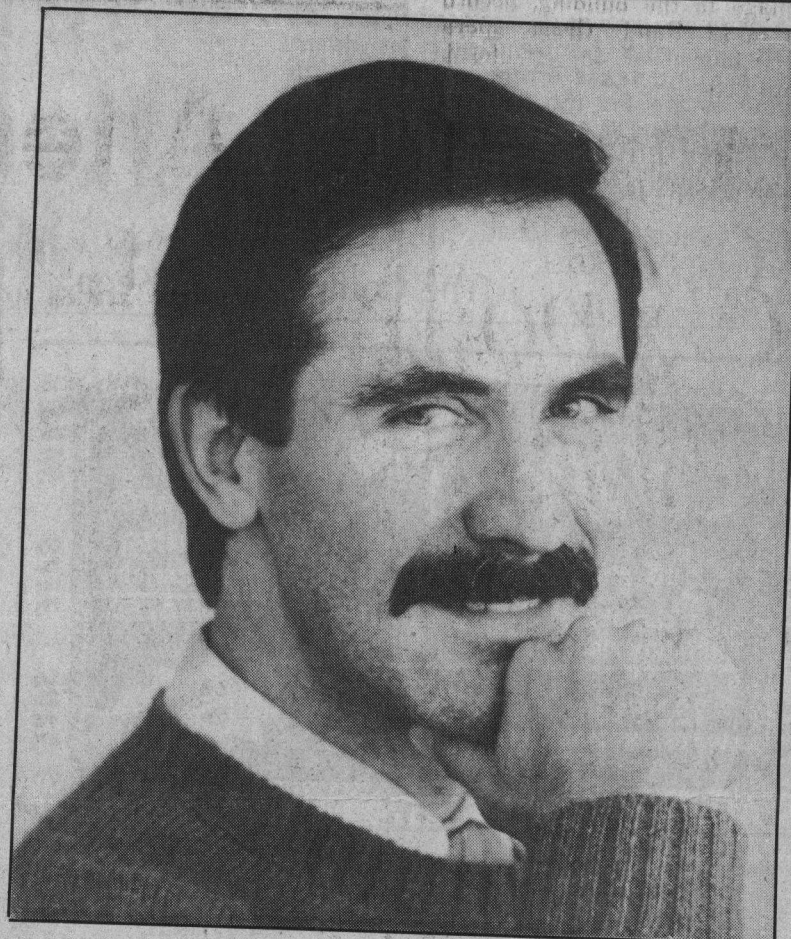
Moses said personal relationships can suffer when individuals struggle to overcome the results of the earthquake, even though they might not realize that's what they're doing. Some may need counseling or support groups to help them separate the earthquake aftermath from other problems.

"Being irritable and even hostile in situations which wouldn't normally warrant these reactions is common," Moses said. "...Finding one's responses to self and others being more critical, negative, nervous and/or sensitive (especially to violation of a minor rule) are typical, and normal reactions to the longer term aftereffects of a trauma."

Parents can be short-tempered with children and cranky with their spouse. Recognizing this, associating it with the earthquake trauma instead of other people and taking a healthy approach to getting life back on track, he said, is a positive way out. This can be a very practical plan of action that includes good hygiene, nutritionally balanced meals and an active spiritual life.

"These routines will help to keep you going and even produce energy to put into taking care of interpersonal relationships," he said.

It's those relationships, if cultivated during the after-crisis, that will pull people through the rough time, Moses said. It's the acknowledgement that each in-



Kurt Ellison

## Wayne Moses says people are still shaking.

dividual needs others over the long haul that will promote healing and future emotional resilience.

Moses suggests that people concentrate less on fault-finding and negative reactions and more on kindness and gentleness with one another. This may need to be deliberate after weeks of feeling and acting out of sorts, but Moses said it will promote recovery from the quake aftermath.

He also suggests that individuals recognize and appreci-

ate their own humanness, and to be aware of guilt feelings about their slow recovery time, or about the earthquake itself. The trauma from the disaster can include feelings of grief and loss. For those who have overwhelming feelings or are treating others in negative or violent ways, he suggests immediately contacting local mental health agencies.

Moses has authored two papers on the earthquake aftermath which are available at no charge by calling 724-3026.