



FARM STRESS & MENTAL HEALTH



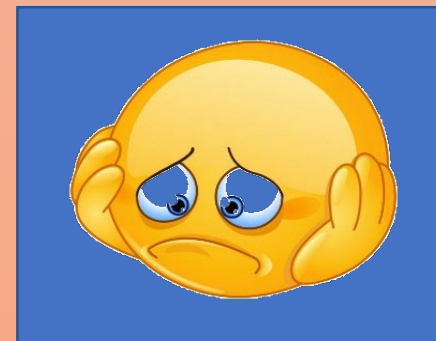
- Warning Signs
- What You Can Do
- Resource Information

What is Mental Health?

Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being.

***Our Mental Health
affects how we
think, feel, and act.***



**Mental health can be
a difficult subject to
talk about for many,
but especially for
our farmers.**



“Farming is one of the most stressful professions with so many uncontrollable variables. Farmers are constantly exposed to situations that can pose a risk to their physical, mental, spiritual and financial health.”

Penn State Extension 2/02/21



Farmers typically have a reputation as stoic and rugged individuals seemingly impervious to all that ails the world. In reality, they're more vulnerable to the effects of stress than many people.

In some cases, this can lead to the unthinkable – suicide.”

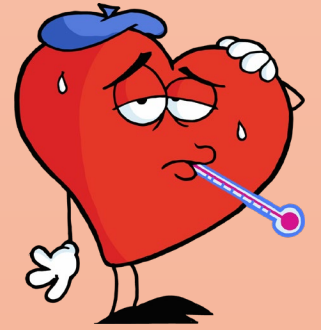
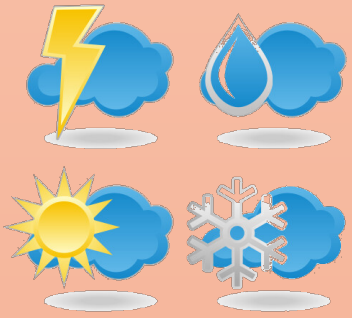




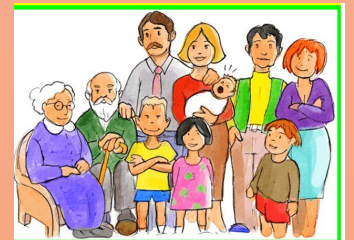
**Approximately 25%
of farmers worldwide are
struggling with their mental
health every year.**

Often, people, especially farmers, struggling with mental health problems will try to conceal their pain for fear of perception and the stigma of being labeled as someone who is weak.





***What factors cause
stress, contributing to
Mental Health issues
for farmers?***





Unpredictable weather and volatile economic conditions in the industry, have contributed to farmers around the world dealing with extremely challenging conditions impacting their livelihood for years causing STRESS!

Add family life concerns such as succession to the next generation, health issues, caring for older family members and farmers are faced with extremely stressful lives.

What is Stress?

**A need or demand
people confront that
is perceived as a
burden
or threatening.**

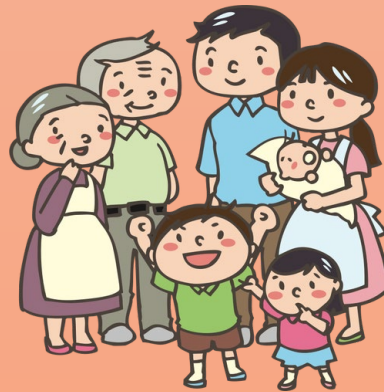


Warning Signs of Stress

- **Change in routines:** Farmers or members of the farm family may change who goes to the market, stop attending regular meetings or religious activities, drop out of other groups, or fail to stop at the local coffee shop or feed mill.
- **Decline in the care of domestic animals:** Livestock or pets may not be cared for in the usual way.
- **Increase in illness:** Farmers or farm family members may experience more upper respiratory illnesses (cold, flu) or other chronic conditions (aches, pains, persistent cough, migraines).

- ***Increase in farm accidents: The risk of farm accidents increases with fatigue or loss of ability to concentrate. Children may be at risk if there isn't alternative child care.***
- ***Decline in appearance of farmstead: The farm family no longer takes pride in the way farm buildings and grounds appear.***
- ***Signs of stress in children: Farm children may act out, show a decline in academic performance, or be increasingly absent from school. They may also show signs of physical abuse or neglect, or become depressed.***
- ***Decreased interest: Farmers or farm families may be less willing to commit to future activities, sign up for gatherings, or show interest in community events.***

***Stress doesn't just affect
the stressed person,
it can also have an impact
on those around us.***

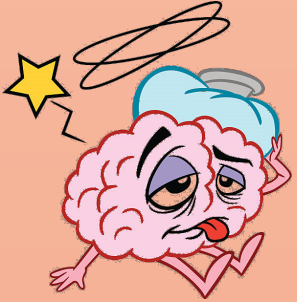


Prolonged Stress

When a situation causing stress continues for an extended period of time, it will cause Chronic or Prolonged Stress.



Signs of Chronic, Prolonged Stress



When farm families are under stress for long periods of time, members of the family may exhibit:



- Headaches, backaches, etc.
- Irritability
- Depression
- Ulcers
- Anger
- Passive-aggressiveness
- Frequent sickness
- Exhaustion
- Loss of humor
- Memory loss
- Self-judgment (e.g., "I blew it.")
- Sadness
- Bitterness
- Withdrawal
- Sleep disturbances
- Loss of spirit
- Substance abuse
- Violence
- Lack of self-confidence (e.g., "I'm a failure.")
- Lack of concentration
- Difficulty making decisions

**Prolonged Stress can
cause Depression**

Signs of Depression in Farmers

While depression effects different people differently, here are some common signs:

- Irritability
- Fatigue
- Emotional outbursts
- Lack of interest in activities or work
- Expressions or feelings of worthlessness
- Nausea
- Muscle cramps
- Substance abuse
- Clammy skin
- Problems sleeping
- Dramatic changes in weight or appetite



Signs of Depression or Suicidal Intent

The greater the number of signs of stress a farm family member is exhibiting, the greater the need for additional help and support.

If farm family members are exhibiting the following signs of depression or suicidal intent, it is important that they get help as soon as possible.

Many of these can also be signs and symptoms of fatigue and stress.

However, when there are multiple signs, they should be taken seriously.

If there are significant changes in the way someone typically functions, they may need immediate help or intervention.

Appearance:

Sad face, slow movements, unkempt appearance, lack of facial expression.

Anxiety and/or depression:

Severe/intense feelings, appearance of anxiety or depression
(both may be present).

Unhappy feelings:

Feelings of sadness, hopelessness, worthlessness.

Withdrawal or isolation:

Reclusiveness, discouragement, listlessness, rejection of friends and support.

Negative thoughts:

“I’m a failure,” or “I’m no good”

Helpless and hopeless:

Sense of complete powerlessness, sense that no one cares.

Reduced activity:

Absence of planning, increased sleeping, feeling that
“doing anything is just too much.”

Substance abuse

People problems:

Lack of interest in being social (“I don’t want anyone to see me.”)

Previous suicide attempts:

Previous attempts are important signs, regardless the severity.

Physical problems:

Sleeping problems, decreased appetite, various physical ailments from aches and pains to severe muscle tension or chronic pain.

Suicidal plan:

Frequent or constant thoughts of a specific suicide plan.

Guilt and low self-esteem:

“It’s all my fault,” or “I should be punished.”

Cries for help:

Making a will, giving away possessions, making statements such as “I’m calling it quits” or “Maybe my family would be better off without me.”

*Are you
experiencing*

STRESS ?

How are you handling it?



What Can You Do to Manage Stress?

“Human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.”

William James

Trying any two of these ideas each day for 2 to 3 weeks and you will be able to notice how much less stressed you have become.

Don't Ignore Negative Emotions!

Suppressing negative emotions causes MORE Stress

You can learn to boost your resilience to stress.

But it takes an intentional effort on your part.



Practice Self Talk

Tell yourself you can get through it.

**You have come through rough times before,
You can do it again.**

You have gotten through more difficult situations.

Practice Deep Breathing



- ***Breathe in slowly for 4 seconds***
- ***Hold for 4 seconds***
- ***Exhale slowly for 4 seconds***
- ***Hold for 4 seconds***
- ***Repeat a few times.***
- ***Try doing this at least once a day.***

Steps to Problem Solving

Pause

Stop and take deep breaths. Breathe in slowly, Breathe out slowly several times.

Accept

“If you don’t like something, change it; if you can’t change it, change the way you think about it”

Mary Engelbreit

Move On

YOU can change your attitude by changing how you handle a situation.

Once you change how you handle a situation, you can see different ways to solve the problem.

How to Help Others

So now you have an idea how stress can affect you.

What can you do if you see these signs in others?

Engage: Don't be Afraid to Ask Questions

Ask the questions:

“How are you feeling?”

“I noticed you haven't seemed yourself lately, is there anything you want to talk about?”

Listen:

Acknowledge their distress.

Don't use platitudes.

Encourage them to talk:

Let them get it out.

Sometimes talking to a friend is the best medicine.

Encourage them:

They are not alone.

They can get through this.

Show Empathy Rather Than Sympathy.

When we hear about a person's difficult situation,
we feel compassion or pity for them,
and we offer our sympathy.

Example:

"I'm sorry to hear you have to sell the farm"

Sympathy, while well-meaning is not helpful.

Making a sincere effort to understand what is happening with someone, offering constructive ideas to address a challenging situation, shows **Empathy**.

Example:

“I know other farmers who have been in similar situations and were able to work through them. Let’s look at what they did and see what might work for your situation.”

Empathy provides a course of action.

Showing **Empathy rather than
Sympathy can go a long way to helping
someone realize they are
not facing a challenge alone.**

You've listened and tried to help with suggestions to resolve a stressful situation.

Now what?

Make a commitment to stay in touch and follow up. These situations usually require some time to be resolved.

This is not a one and done situation.

*If you sense an individual is in
danger of hurting themselves,
DO NOT leave them alone.*

*Call a family member
or one of the Help Lines
in the following slides .*

Mental Health Resources for Farmers

- [Farm Aid Hotline](#): Call 800- 327-6243. The line is staffed by advocates familiar with farmers' specific situations. Available Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. EST.
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#): Call 800-273-8255. Their counselors provide free and confidential emotional support in suicidal crisis or emotional distress, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- [Crisis Text Line](#): Text 741741 to connect with a crisis counselor, 24/7.
- [National Institute of Mental Health \(NIMH\)](#) <http://nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml>
- [National Farmers Union – Farm Crisis Center](#) <http://farmcrisis.nfu.org/>
- [American Farm Bureau Federation Rural Resilience Program](#)
<http://www.fb.org/programs/rural-resilience>
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)
<https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>

Financial Resources for Farmers

- **USDA**

<https://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/grants-and-loans-farmers>

<http://www.farmers.gov/fund>

- **Farm Aid Resource Guide**

www.farmaid.org

Other Resources

- **American Farm Bureau**
farmstateofmind@fb.org
- **NY FarmNet**
<https://www.nyfarmnet.org/farm-stress>
- **Michigan State University Extension**
https://www.canr.msu.edu/managing_farm_stress/rural-resiliency-online-course-afbf
https://www.canr.msu.edu/managing_farm_stress/bury-seeds-not-stress
- **Michael R Rosmann, Iowa Farmer and Psychologist:**
<http://www.agbehavioralhealth.com/>

Treatments for addiction, mental illness, and resources to improve your financial well-being are constantly evolving and improving. If you need help or know of someone who needs help, reach out.

