

From One “Dairy Girl” to the Next...

“Taking Care of YOU in Turbulent Times”

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Dairy Farm Women have evolved in their farm roles, from traditional “bookkeeper” to now playing multiple roles both on and off the farm. Coupled with traditional roles that women tend to keep including household, children and community activities, it can enhance levels of stress as these roles become intertwined.

This often results in symptoms of anxiety, worry, and stress—trying to balance farm, family, and non-farm activities. Yet, families choose this lifestyle to raise their families on the farm, being their own boss and knowing the values that can be instilled in raising children there.

As a dairy girl myself, a wife and mom, still engaged in our 4th generation farm and the dairy community, having seen stress play out, I think the DAIRYGIRL acronym can be a summary of positive ways we can take care of ourselves during stress or turbulent times.

Remember DAIRY GIRL:

Deep Breathe

Active Goals and Exercise

Implement change

Remember your TEAM

why? What’s your WHY?

Gratitude

Increase Happiness

Restore-mind, body, soul

Learn everyday

My role in Extension has typically focused on dairy production management. The **Dairy Girl** concept will focus on “YOU” management as it’s hard to take care of cows or loved ones if you haven’t first taken care of **YOU!**

Deep Breath – Start your day with a deep breath to inhale the future and exhale the past. Take 10 minutes and plan out your day from daily farm chores to household grocery list or meal plan. Understand that it may not always go as planned (cow calves, tractor breakdown, child is sick), and use deep breathing techniques to reduce stress until a new plan can be made.

Be Active – Keep your SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, timely) goals in front of you and be proactive in achieving and sharing them as a farm family. Know Procrastination Increases Stress! Exercise Reduces Stress! Stay active!

Implement Change – Try spelling Challenge without Change. If you’re going to rise to the challenge, you must be prepared to change. Instead of “I can’t change milk prices” or “I can’t work with him/her”, create re-frames for your thoughts to “I can change how I....” then follow through implementing.

Remember – Who’s on your team? Surround yourself with positive people, those that talk more about constructive thoughts and ideas and less about other people. Remember, you become like the five people you spend the most time with. So, who do you want to become? Remember to bond with them.

WHY? – Take a step back and practice self-awareness. Visualize what’s important and why. But, if a crisis occurs, don’t get stuck in the WHY?!

Gratitude – There is so much beauty around us and often we forget to look up. Create a gratitude journal and write down 3 things you’re grateful for each night. They can be simple things; family meal, funny joke, someone’s laugh, and you’ll quickly realize those simple things add up to the greatest moments in life.

Increase Happiness – When everything else is out of your control, you can be in the driver’s seat of happiness. They say laughter is the best medicine! It’s contagious, if you’re happy, it often spreads to your spouse and children.

Restore – You can’t pour from an empty cup. Making health a priority is important for your mind, body, and soul. This includes exercise, sleep, hydration, and fueling your body with nutritious foods. Some find running, reading, gardening, or faith and community service additional ways to fill their cup back up. It’s important to know what works for you, take time to do what makes your soul happy. 😊 And smile, it relaxes and restores peace of mind. 😊

Learn – Learn from people who inspire you, spend time with them and ask for their help. And, Learn to help others—It tends to make us feel most human. As you actively share your goals with family members, learn about their goals.

The secret to living well and longer is: eat half, walk double, laugh triple and love without measure. – Tibetan Proverb

Mental health matters! You are worth more than the sum of all your problems. Don’t be afraid to use mental health resources, “Faith is taking the first step even when you don’t see the whole staircase”

– Martin Luther King Jr.