A Better Farm Starts with a Better You

Emily Krekelberg
Extension Educator, Farm Safety & Health

Boots in the Barn Webinar
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Some notes on well-being, mental health, & mental illness
THE OLD NARRATIVE

Mental Illness

Mental Health
Optimal Mental Health

Quadrant 1
Good mental health
No mental illness
Flourishing

Quadrant 2
Severe stress on mental health
No mental illness
Languishing

Quadrant 3
Severe stress on mental health
Mental illness
Languishing and Mental Illness

Quadrant 4
Good mental health
Mental illness
Flourishing and Mental Illness

Severe Mental Illness

No Mental Illness

Poor Mental Health

The nature of farm stress
STRESSORS IMPACTING FARMERS

- High interest rates
- Large debt loads
- Commodity prices
- Weather/disaster
- Gov’t regulations
- Long work hours
- Livestock illness
- Crop yield
- Machinery breakdown
- Illness/injury
- Relationships
- Barriers to help
THE AGRARIAN IMPERATIVE

“To farmers, ‘the land is everything.’ Ownership of a family farm is the triumphant result of the struggles of multiple generations. Losing the family farm is the ultimate loss – bringing shame to the generation that has let down their forbearers and dashing the hopes for successors.”

Rosmann, 2003
THE AGRARIAN IMPERATIVE

“…impels farmers to hang onto their land at all costs. The agrarian imperative instills farmers to work incredibly hard, to endure unusual pain and hardship, and to take uncommon risks.” (Rosmann, 2010)
Identifying stress
## RECOGNIZE SIGNS OF STRESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Emotional</th>
<th>Behavioral</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
<th>Self-worth</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Headaches</td>
<td>Sadness</td>
<td>Irritability</td>
<td>Memory loss</td>
<td>Feel like a failure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ulcers</td>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>Acting out</td>
<td>Lack of concentration</td>
<td>Can’t do anything right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backaches</td>
<td>Bitterness</td>
<td>Passive-aggressive behavior</td>
<td>Difficulty with simple decisions</td>
<td>Not being able to fix things</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eating problems</td>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Anger</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sleeping problems</td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Increased drinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frequent sickness</td>
<td>Loss of spirit</td>
<td>Taking drugs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exhaustion</td>
<td>Loss of sense of humor</td>
<td>Isolation</td>
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<td>Poor hygiene</td>
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<td>Violence</td>
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SIGNS OF PROLONGED STRESS

- Previously identified signs have not improved or have multiplied
- Change in routine
- Appearance declines
- Increase in illness
- Increase in accidents
- Family members show signs of stress
REACH OUT IF YOU ARE CONCERNED

- It can be uncomfortable, but reaching out is critical
- Individuals experiencing stress typically feel isolated
- Acknowledgment of someone’s suffering can offer them relief
CONVERSATION STARTERS

I've been worried about you. Can we talk about what you are experiencing? If not, who are you comfortable talking to?

I am someone who cares and wants to listen. What do you want me to know about how you are feeling?

It seems like you are going through a difficult time. How can I help you to find help?
How can we best help ourselves, family, & neighbors?
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

- Adjust your own oxygen mask
- You can’t pour from an empty cup
- Practice intentional well-being
- Self care is not selfish
STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE WELLNESS

- Deep breathing
- Meditation/Reflection
- Positive self-talk
- Physical Activity
- Hobbies
- Connect with people in your social network
- Speaking with a mental health professional
Deep breathing
Meditation/Reflection
Positive self-talk
Physical activity
Hobbies
Connect with your social network
Speak with a mental health professional
RESOURCES

- z.umn.edu/ruralstress
- extension.iastate.edu/iowaconcern
- Extension
- Department of Agriculture
- Your physician
- Faith-based community
REMEMBER:

- It’s okay to not be okay
- Bad days happen
- You are not alone
- It’s okay to ask for help
Emily Krekelberg
612-756-3977
krek0033@umn.edu