

#NebraskaStrong

Using a Productive Mindset – Mending the Stress Fence

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Adapted from Michigan State University – Mending the Stress Fence Program and Wellness in Tough Times: Co-author, Brandy VanDeWalle

Program Elements

- What is Stress?
 - Recognizing Stress
 - Symptoms of Stress
- Coping with Stress
- Reducing Stress
- Helping Others
- Resources



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Work & Farm Life Can be Rewarding, Yet Stressful at Times

What is stress?

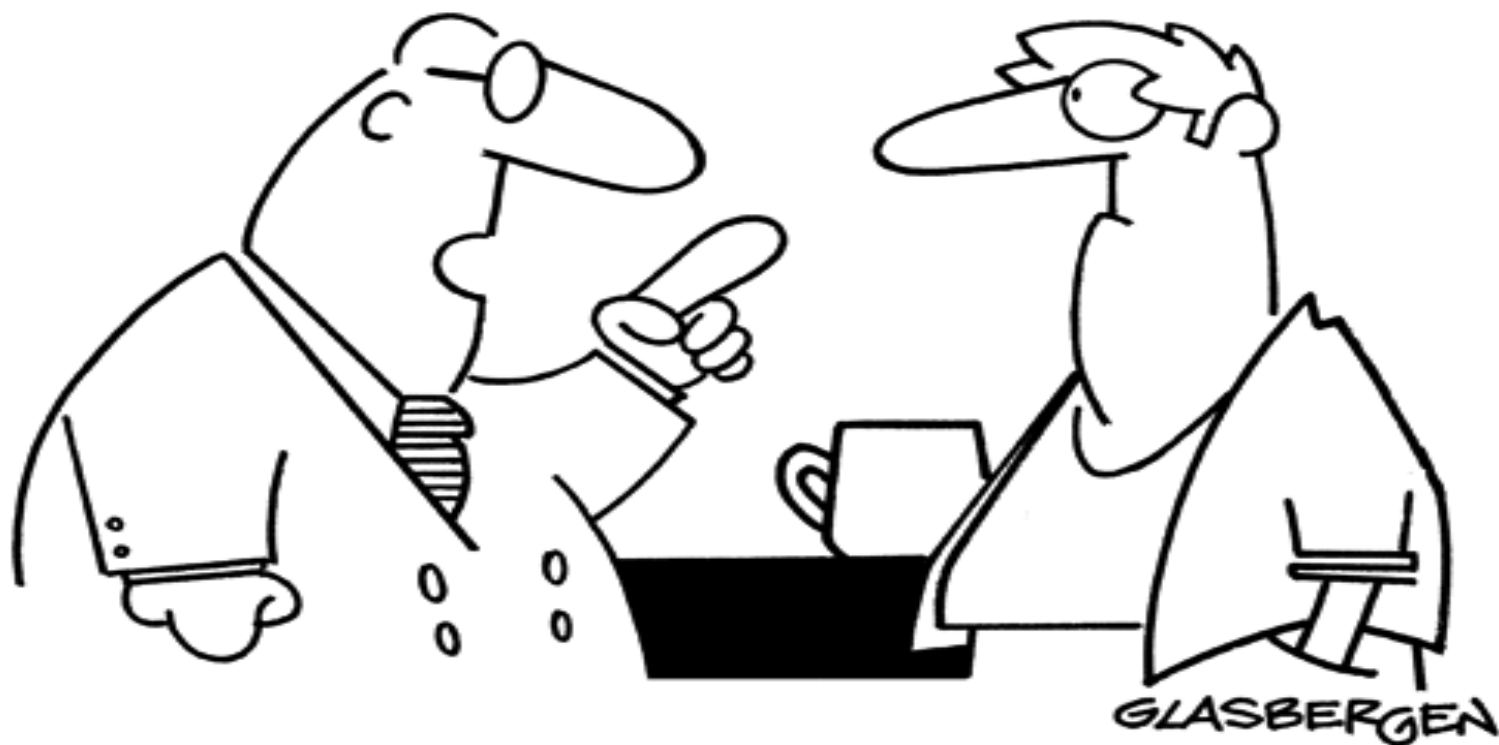
Can it be good
and bad?

Eustress - good

Distress – bad



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**“Aside from ulcers, heart attacks, bypass surgery,
drug and alcohol problems, and broken families,
a little hard work never hurt anyone!”**

What are your stressors? Work, farm, or personal?

**Commodity
prices**



**Large
debt load**



**Cash flow
/ finances**



**Long days
and time
demands**



**Sleep
deprivation**



**Livestock
illness**



**Machinery
repairs**



**Weather &
production
issues**



**Disagreements
with family
members**



All about perspective...



Farm Stress – What We Know

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, p. 72).

*“The land means everything to farmers. . . .
Losing the family farm is the ultimate loss. . . .”*

(Rosmann, 2008, p. 39).



Loss and Grief

Loss is something removed (person, home, relationship, meaning, identity)



Ambiguous Loss:

- Loss is confusing, uncertain, unverified, goes on and on (Boss, 1999)
- [Ambiguous Loss | Rural Wellness \(unl.edu\)](#)



Grief involves coping with loss.


Grief can accompany any event that disrupts or challenges our sense of normalcy or ourselves. This includes the loss of connections that define us (Cleveland Clinic, 2023).

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Rural /Farm Stress – The Situation



Farming is a stressful occupation with
 levels of anxiety and depression.

Farmer suicide rates are
2 – 5x higher than the
national average.

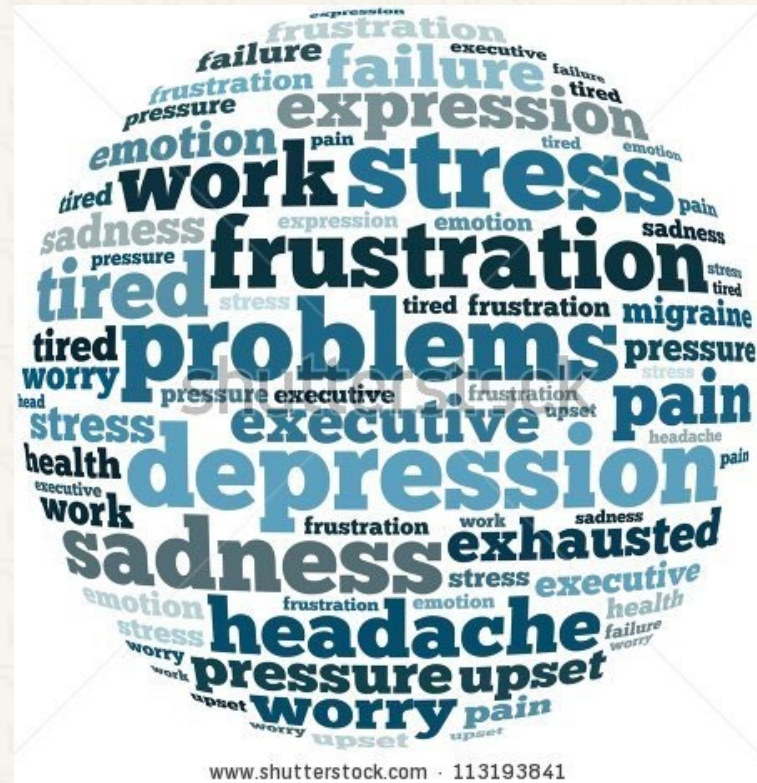
Stigma around mental
health challenges

American Farm Bureau:
<https://www.fb.org/initiative/farm-state-of-mind>

Signs & Symptoms of Stress

What are the symptoms of stress that affect our

- Body
- Mind
- Actions



Signs of Stress

- How do you know when you are feeling stressed?
- What are your physical, mental, emotional or social signs?
- Self-awareness: you are the expert.
 - What does stress look like to you?
 - What does stress sound like to you?
- How would someone who knows you well say you respond to stress?



Signs of Stress



BODY

headaches
stomachaches
backaches
high blood
pressure
high blood sugar
racing heart
nausea



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Signs of Stress



MIND

anxious
angry
sad
bitter
depressed
hopeless



Photo: Copyright istock.com/roman023



**“When I get angry, I turn into a huge green monster
and smash everything that gets in my way. It’s the first
stress-management program that’s really worked for me!”**

Signs of Stress



ACTION

- can't sleep
- sleep too much
- don't eat
- overeats
- increased use of
cigarettes/drugs/alcohol
- break things
- yell/scream
- withdraw



Photo: Copyright istock.com/roman023

How Stress Affects Your Body



<https://ed.ted.com/lessons/how-stress-affects-your-body-sharon-horesh-bergquist>
(Bergquist, n.d.)

Coping with Stress



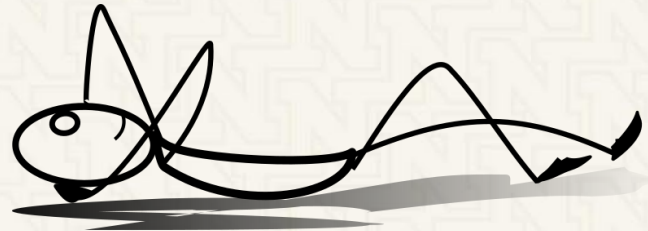
Five Stress-Less Tips

- 1) Build gaps into your day to ensure you time for a mental break
- 2) Be Assertive – Learn when to say “yes” or “no”
- 3) Take Time Off
- 4) Walk the Walk
Activity builds those ‘feel good’ endorphins
- 5) Talk the talk
Visit with someone, journal, etc.

Source: UNL Wellness Center

Stress Reducing Activities/Actions

- Eating a well-balanced diet.
- Exercising ½ hour a day every day/every other day.
- Getting enough sleep to meet the demands of your body.
- Accepting that stress is a part of life –don't dwell on it.
- Clearly define home and work responsibilities.
- Managing time efficiently.
- Setting realistic goals.
- Learning to relax.
- Separate work and family time.



Sleep is important!

HOW MUCH SLEEP DO YOU NEED?

AGE GROUP		RECOMMENDED HOURS OF SLEEP
Infant	4-12 months	12-16 hours per 24 hours
Toddler	1-2 years	11-14 hours per 24 hours
Preschool	3-5 years	10-13 hours per 24 hours
School Age	6-12 years	9-12 hours per 24 hours
Teen	13-18 years	8-10 hours per 24 hours
Adult	18-60 years	7 or more hours per night
	65+	7-8 hours

According to the CDC, 30% of US adults report that they usually get less than the recommended amount of sleep.



Eight Dimensions of Wellness

The Wellness Wheel

ruralwellness.unl.edu

☒ Mending the Stress
Fence Handouts



Cultivate a Productive Mindset

- **Use self-talk**
 - **Choose three words to help maintain a positive mindset (calm, capable, controlled)**
- **Use your breath**
 - **Deep breathing time to pause, accept and begin problem solving**
- **Use Acceptance**
 - **Focus on solutions**



***A healthy farm or ranch is nothing without
a healthy you!***

Farm Family Wellness Alliance
When you feel better, you farm better.



American Farm Bureau:

<https://www.fb.org/initiative/farm-state-of-mind>

Farm Foundation:

<https://www.farmfoundation.org/resources/farm-family-wellness-alliance/>

Key Points



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- **Think about the ways you seek to manage stress.**
- **Brainstorm and explore the variety of coping strategies available.**
- **Learning new strategies or adopting different ways of managing stress that you have not used before may be necessary.**

(Adapted from North Dakota State University,
<https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/publications/kids-family/responding-to-distressed-people/fs1805.pdf>)

What About Others?

What can we do to help?

You're NOT Alone!

Communication Tool – Asking Questions:

- Asking the right questions can open the lines of communication with others around you that are under stress.
- Asking open-ended questions promotes relationship development and trust and ensures mutual understanding.
- Learning, practicing, and modeling this skill can have a profound impact on the level of response and engagement for the farming community.

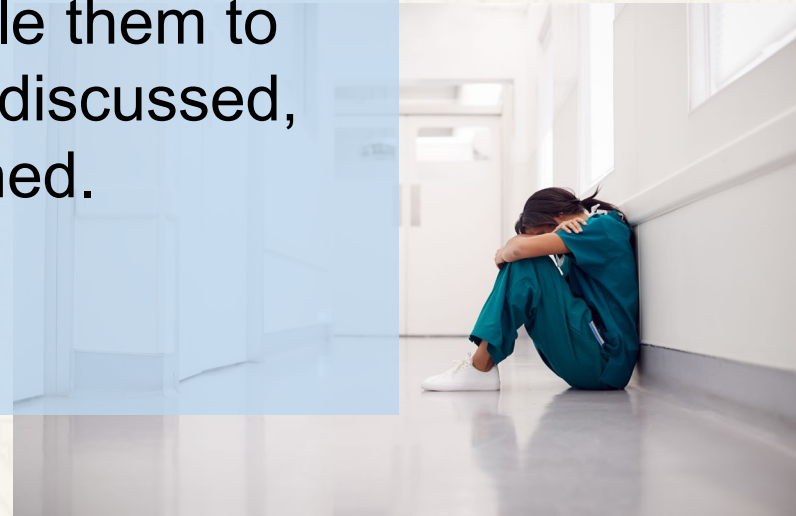


Communication Tool – Asking Questions:

Closed	Open-Ended
Are you feeling OK?	Tell me what's bothering you. How do you feel about that?
Are you happy with the way things are?	Tell me about the things that are going well for you. (or aren't going the way you'd like)
Are you concerned about all the stress in your life?	What steps are you taking to manage your stress?
Do you need some help?	How do you hope I might be able to help you?

Stressful Situations & Others

- People under stress typically don't process things as well as expected. They are easily overloaded.
- Be sensitive to help people organize information in a way that will enable them to remember and process what was discussed, and the consensus that was reached.
- Timely follow-up is critical.



Assisting Others in Distress

- Recognize signs of distress
- Express your concern and ask them about their situation
- Understand the warning signs
- Ask them about their plans if you see warning signs
- Take immediate action

*Any suicidal talk or behavior must be treated as serious. **DO NOT IGNORE SIGNS of DISTRESS or SUICIDE.***



<https://suicideprevention.unl.edu/home/>

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/suicide-prevention/suicide-prevention.htm/>

What Are the Warning Signs of Suicide?

Talking or writing about suicide or death

Feeling hopeless, trapped or like a burden

Depression

Giving away prized possessions

Making a plan, acquiring means

Isolation from others – loss of interest

Mood change - agitation



<https://suicideprevention.unl.edu/home/>



How Do I Ask Someone about Suicide?

Ask directly:

- Are you having thoughts of suicide?

Asking directly does **not** increase risk of suicide and may provide the person with relief that someone sees their struggle.

What if someone says “yes”?

- Do not leave the person alone.
- Call for help and/or take them to a hospital or healthcare provider.



CALL, TEXT OR CHAT 988

**We might be #NebraskaStrong -
but please don't be too strong to reach out for help.**

24/7, confidential crisis support

for Veterans and their loved ones

You don't have to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care to connect.

 **Dial 988 then Press 1**

 **Chat online**

 **Text 838255**



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IMPROVED WELLNESS AND REDUCED STRESS IN RURAL NEBRASKAN COMMUNITIES

ruralwellness.unl.edu

Resources for improved wellness and reduced stress
in rural Nebraska communities





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Disaster Relief – resource referral





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<https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Nebraska-Family-Helpline.aspx>

Mental Health Screening

Free & Anonymous screenings for mental health



<https://www.bryanhealth.com/services/counseling-mental-health/mental-health-online-screenings/>

How are you Feeling?

Mental health is a key part of your overall health. Take an online screening for yourself or someone you care about to learn more about your mental health.

It's quick, confidential and completely anonymous.

National Suite of Services

Farm Family Wellness Alliance provides, through partnership:

- An online peer-to-peer community via “Togetherall”, monitored 24/7 by licensed clinicians
- Wrap-around suite of services provided by PAS (Personal Assistance Services) from resources to 1:1 counseling, including financial, nutrition, and mental health counseling.
- Marketing, network engagement, and administration from Farm Foundation



Using a Productive Mindset – Understanding Stress



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