



Managing Stress and Pursuing Wellness in Times of Tight Margins

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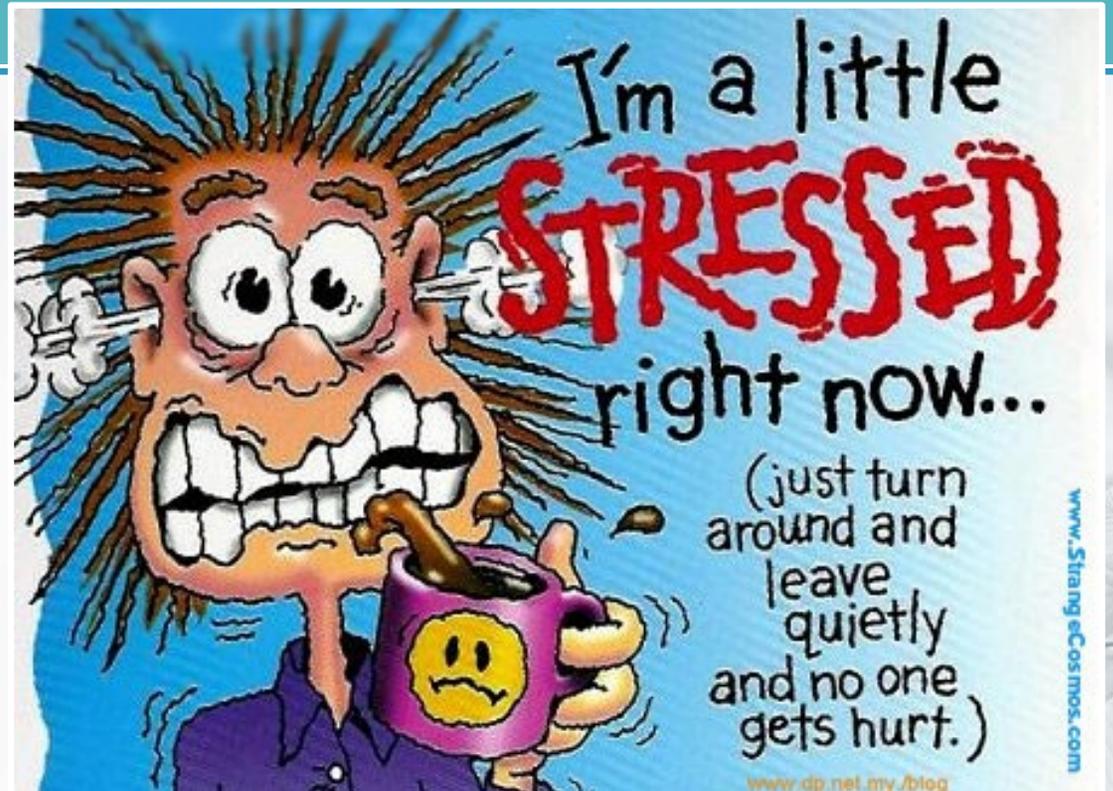
Learning Objectives

- Increase awareness of rural stress issues and warning signs of stress challenges
- Explore key stress issues and communicate about steps in managing stress
- Identify and apply useful coping methods for responding to stress and improving wellness
- Identify and access available resources and sources of support

What is Stress?

Stress definition:

A state of physical, mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from difficult or demanding circumstances



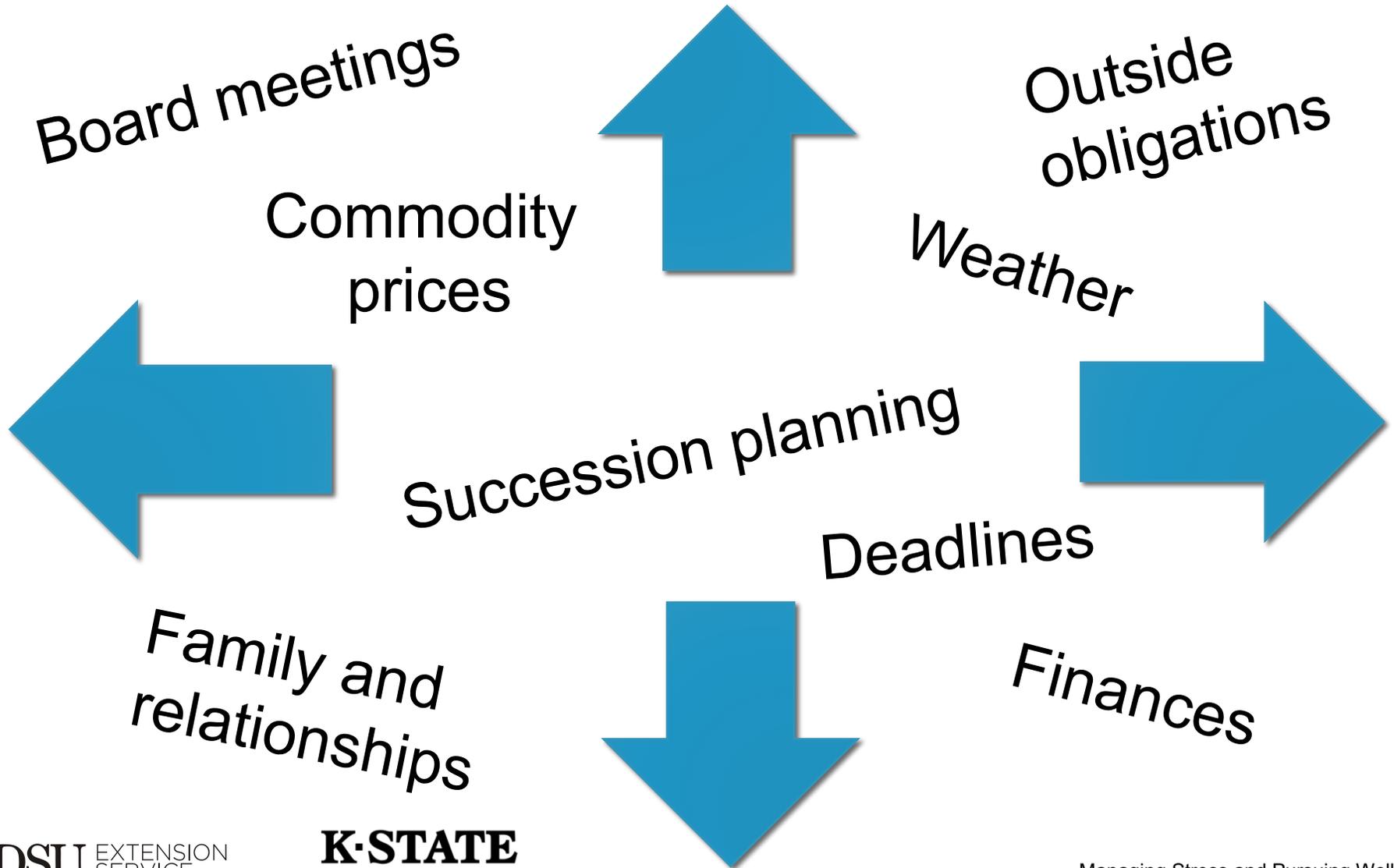
Discussion Question

- How do you know you are feeling stressed?
- Physical, mental, emotional, social signs

Your Personal Stress Zone?



Farm / Ranch Pressures

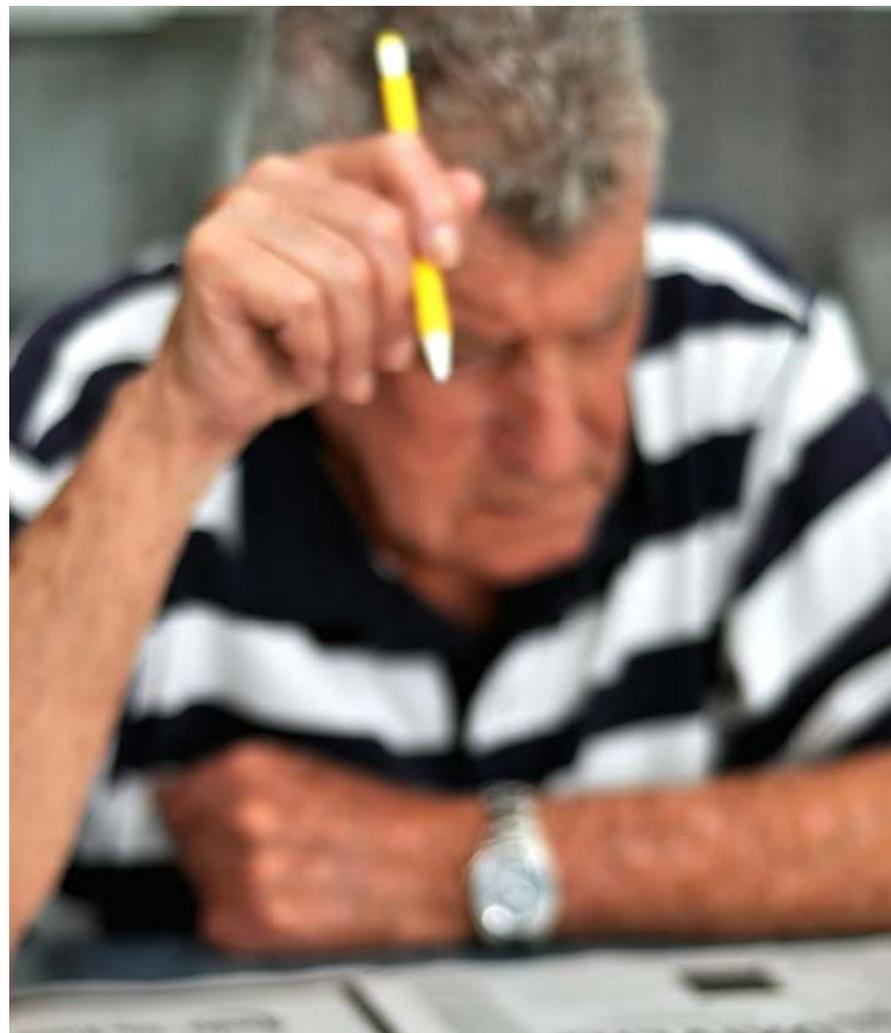


Rural Stress and Individual / Family Wellness



Key Sources of Rural Stress – Farm Financial Situation

- Net farm/ranch income decline
- Debt/asset ratio – meeting debt payments
- Cash flow on the operation
- Arranging financing
- Complicated or strained decision making – tendency to make worse decisions under stress



Key Sources of Rural Stress – Family Financial Situation



- Ability to meet family living expenses
- Long hours, two or three jobs, balancing work and family
- Sense of inadequacy due to economic difficulties
- Facing the challenge of having to leave the farm (generational legacy)

Warning Signs of Stress

Stress signs are **warning signals** to slow down and focus on wellness.



Stress Signals – Physical and Emotional / Mental

Physical Signs of Stress

- Head aching
- Back/neck muscles tense, aching
- Stomach upset, distressed
- Breathing short, labored
- Low energy
- Body fatigue, tiredness
- Aggravated health issues

Emotional Signs of Stress

- Irritable about little things
- Sense of frustration, anger
- Impatient, restless
- Feeling discouraged, hopeless
- Withdrawal from others, isolation
- Anxiety, panic feelings
- Difficulty concentrating

Stress Signals – Behavioral and Relationship

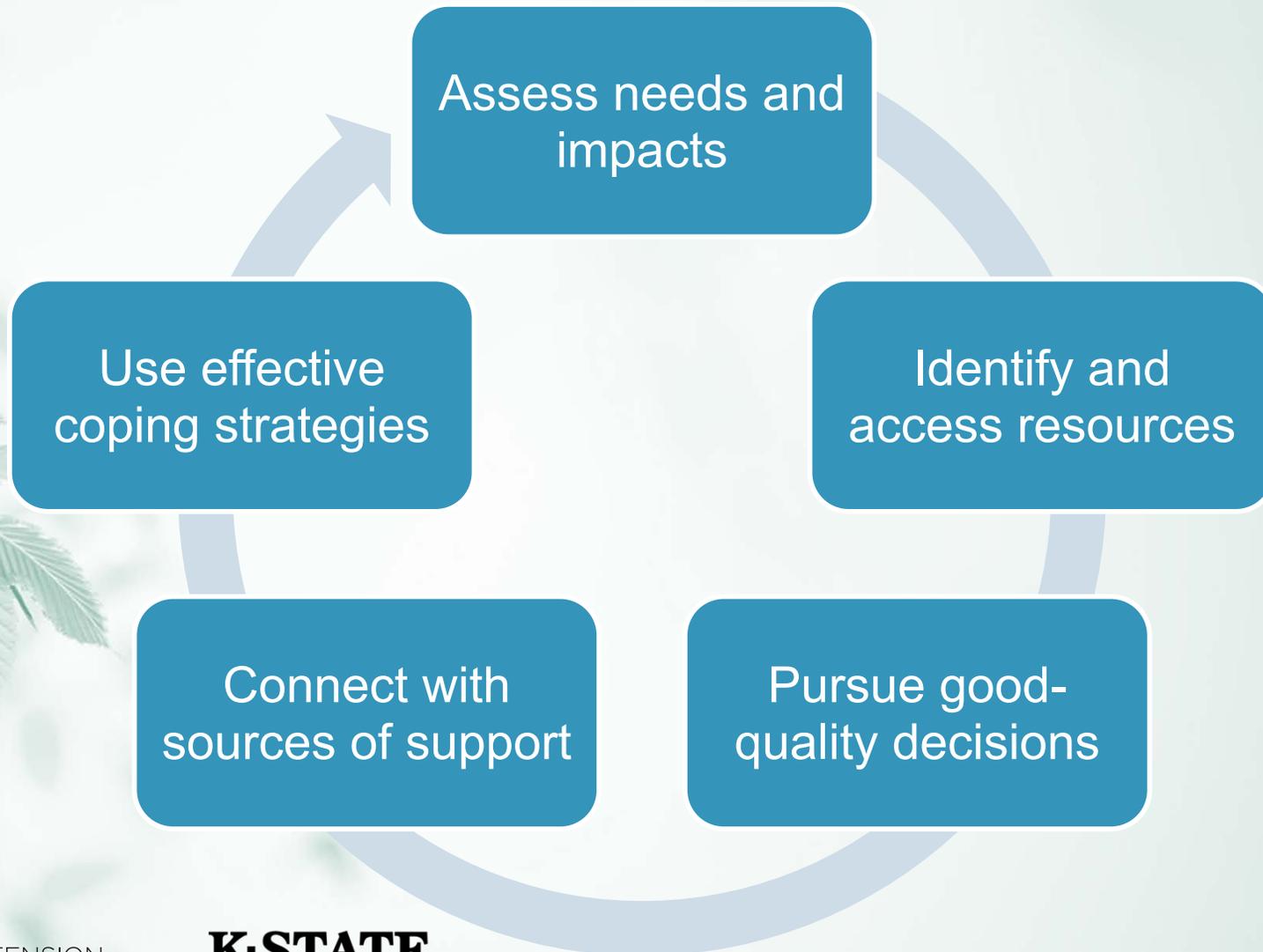
Behavioral Signs of Stress

- Difficulties with sleep
- Inability to relax, concentrate
- Getting angry easily
- Trouble making decisions
- Increased use of alcohol or other drugs
- Difficulty being flexible
- Overeating or loss of appetite

Relationship Signs of Stress

- Communication difficulties
- Conflict with family members, others
- Lack of satisfaction
- Verbal or physical outbursts, abuse
- Strained interactions
- Avoiding others
- Lack of time with spouse, children, others

Managing Rural Stress Model



Step 1 – Managing Stresses

Assess Needs and Impacts

Stressor Impact –
How big is the “splash”
in your life due to a
stressor?

- What needs come up (more income, sleep, etc.)?
- How manageable is the impact – not at all to very

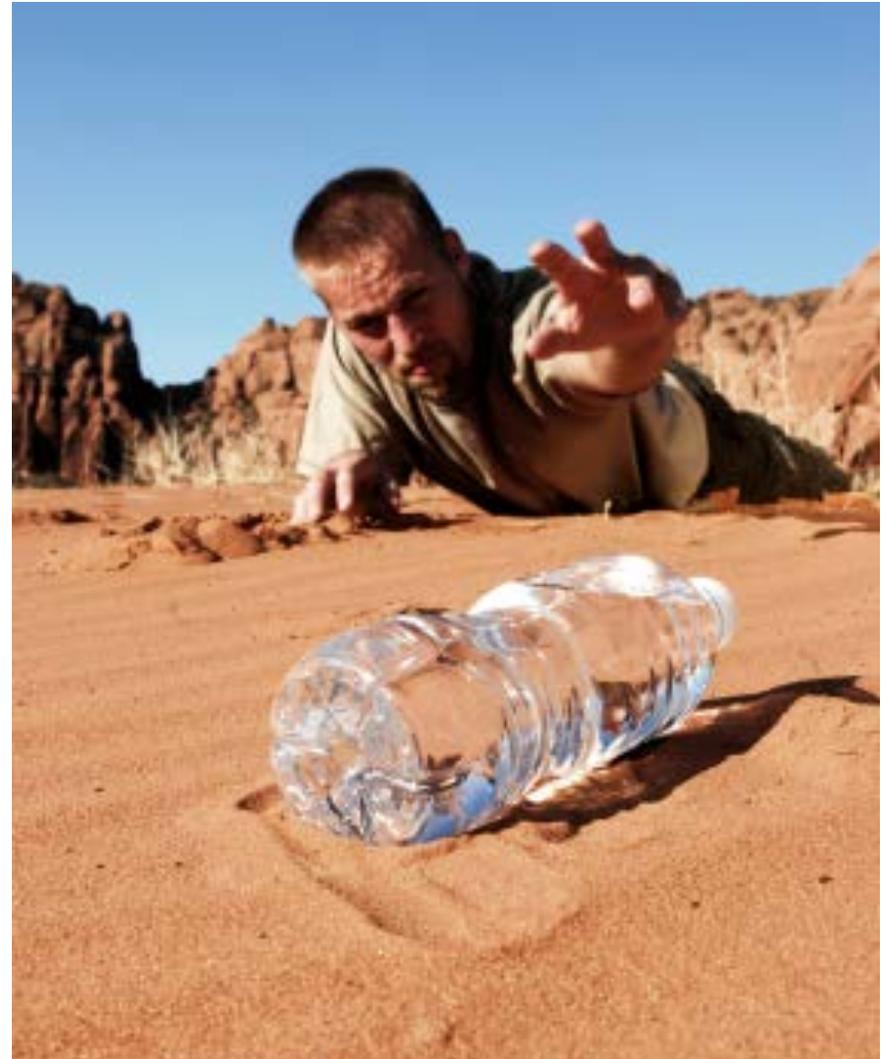


Step 2 – Managing Stresses

Identify and Access Resources

Evaluate Resources – What resources will help you?

- Take stock of resources available
- Type of resources – material, personal
- Recognize and use resources effectively



Step 3 – Managing Stresses

Pursue Good-quality Decisions

Make Decisions – How to respond?

- Gather information
- Assess options
- Discuss key decisions with others
- Clarify goals
- Be open to change



Step 4 – Managing Stresses

Connect With Sources of Support

Support Sources – Where to connect?

- Assess supports
- Informal – family, friends
- Formal – faith, professionals, other
- Willing to approach others for support

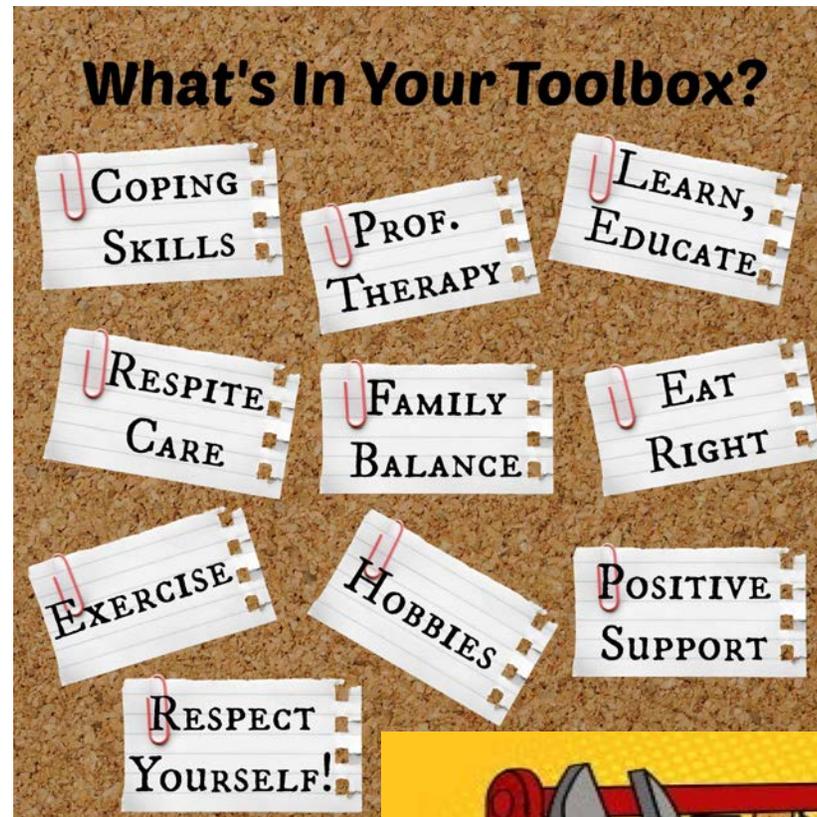


Step 5 – Managing Stresses

Use Effective Coping Strategies

Coping Strategies – What's in your toolbox?

“Tools are designed to do very different jobs. Find the right coping strategy (tool) to fit the situation, and remember to change strategies (tools) if the one you are using isn't working!”



Coping Methods

How many can
your group list
in 90 seconds?



Coping Methods for Stress – Negative or Less Effective Methods

What are some negative coping methods?

Eating binge

Drinking alcohol

Spending money

Gossiping

Other?

Avoiding,
withdrawing

?

Coping Methods for Stress – Positive or More Effective Methods

What helps you relax?

Exercise

Play in the
garden

Go for a drive

Call a friend

Watch a movie

Family
conversation

Stretch

Coping Priority 1 – Rest and Renew Yourself

- You can't care for your farm or family well if you don't **care for yourself.**
- **Explore sources of personal renewal** that you value (faith, nature, hobby, etc.).
- Build in **“rest breaks”** daily, weekly (“Thrive with 5”).
- **Connect with others** who give you strength, support.



“Sustainable farming includes sustaining the farmer.”

Coping Priority 2 – Healthy Communication

- **Be willing to share** your stresses or concerns with others
- **Talk and share with others** who understand or who you can trust
- **Listen** to one another
- **Avoid withdrawal or anger** as your primary mode of communication



Coping Priority 3 – Focus on Relationships

- **Reassure family members** of love and commitment
- **Work through conflicts** that may occur
- **Follow consistent family routines** that give security, such as family meals together
- **Take time away together** as a couple or family



“The most important part of a healthy farm is a healthy family.”

Key Resources – NDSU Extension

- “Stress Management Series for Farm/Ranch Families” (FS282, FS283, FS284, FS285, FS286, FS287)
- “Farming and Ranching in Tough Times” (FS1804)
- “Responding to Distressed People” (FS1805)
- “Working With Distressed Clientele” (FS1789)

- Links:

www.ag.ndsu.edu/cff/resources-for-emotional-and-mental-health

Key Resources – Stress and Farming

- eXtension – Production agriculture and Stress resources
<http://articles.extension.org/pages/70313/production-agriculture-and-stress>
- Live Your Life Well Campaign, Mental Health America –
www.mentalhealthamerica.net/live-your-life-well
- North Dakota Prevention Resource & Media Center –
<https://prevention.nd.gov/>
- Farms.com – Dr. Val Farmer, “Mind Over Matter” video series (10 videos) – www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL89017F264C488BC5
- Calm in The Storm mobile stress app –
<http://calminthestormapp.com/>

Key Resources – Mental and Emotional Health

- **Call 2-1-1** – Statewide 24-hour helpline, health and human services information and referral
- **Refer to a local health-care provider or mental health professional.** If you or someone you know needs help, contact and connect with a local professional such as a clergy member, medical professional, law enforcement, school counselor or social worker.
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:**
1-800-273-8255 (TALK)

Visit the K-State Families website for more information about families and stress:
www.ksre.ksu.edu/families

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