



Managing Stress and Pursuing Wellness

in Times of Tight Margins

Sean Brotherson, Ph.D., Extension Family Science Specialist, North Dakota State University

Lindy Berg, B.S., Extension Agent, North Dakota State University

Learner Objectives

As a result of participation in this program, participants will be able to:

- 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

Lesson Planning

- Study and learn the information and ideas presented in the materials.
- Decide what you wish to present to your intended audience.
- Plan a lesson introduction, which may include a suggested activity or your own ideas.
- Make copies of the presentation materials or handouts that you will need.
- Adjust your educational approach as needed based on available time, space and participant numbers.

Note: The four brief “mini” lessons are optional. Please assess the time available and audience needs, and decide whether to include a mini lesson in a particular lesson. The four, which have several slides each, are:

- Brief Lesson 1 – Understanding Stress and Depression (MF3412)
- Brief Lesson 2 – Understanding Suicide and Depression (MF3413)
- Brief Lesson 3 – Cultivating a Productive Mindset (MF3414)
- Brief Lesson 4 – What Can I Do to Help? (MF3415)

Handouts and Resources

Materials to be made available can include:

- Facilitators Guide — for the individual providing the instruction (MF3409)
- Participant Handout 1: The Farm/Ranch Stress Zone (MF3416) (one per participant)
- Participant Handout 2: Managing Rural Stress Model (MF3417) (one per participant)
- Participant Handout 3: My Coping Strategies Plan (MF3418) (one per participant)
- Participant Handout 4: My Farming Resource Network (MF3419) (one per participant)
- NDSU Extension Publication FS1804, “Farming and Ranching in Tough Times” (<https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/publications/kids-family/farming-and-ranching-in-tough-times>)

- MSU Extension Publication – “Cultivating a Productive Mindset” (optional) (http://msue.anr.msu.edu/uploads/resources/pdfs/MSUE_Farm_Stress_Fact_Sheet_WEB.pdf)
- Lesson Evaluation (one per participant) (MF3411)

Time Schedule

Introduction (five to 10 minutes)

- Walk through the first few slides of the lesson, which explore the “Stress Zone” and unique farm/ranch pressures. Discuss the answers and thoughts of the group.
- Invite a local counselor, mental health professional or medical doctor to share briefly about resources in the community for managing stress. Have the person stay to answer questions if desired.
- Invite a local mental health professional to do a brief stress or depression screening for participants.

Presentation of Key Concepts and Lesson (five to 12 minutes each)

- Introduction – What is Stress? (slides 3 to 8)
- Warning Signs of Stress (slides 9 to 11)
- Managing Rural Stress Model (slides 12 to 17)
- Coping Methods for Stress (slides 18 to 23)
- Key Resources (slides 24 to 26)

Optional Sections:

- Understanding Stress and Depression
- Understanding Suicide and Depression
- Cultivating a Productive Mindset
- What Can I Do to Help?

(These mini lessons are optional; please assess time available and determine whether to include in a particular lesson.)

Lesson Review and Program Evaluation (five to 10 minutes)

Additional Lesson Resources

NDSU Extension Publications

- “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)



Slide 1 - Lesson Introduction

Introduce yourself and welcome the participants. Briefly identify the lesson topic. Ask participants to introduce themselves if appropriate (not necessary).

If planned, take a few minutes to begin with one of the suggestions for an introduction outlined in the Facilitators Guide (for example, the “Farm/Ranch Stress Zone” discussion; a brief outline of community resources from a local professional).



Slide 2 - Key Learning Objectives

Go through the lesson objectives so participants can form some expectations.

- **Get educated:** Increase awareness of rural stress issues (farm/ranch, etc.) and warning signs associated with stress and/or depression
- **Manage stress:** Explore key stress issues and communicate about useful steps in managing stress
 - Plan ahead of time how you might communicate with a person under stress.
 - Think about what you are going to ask or say (or not say).
- **Apply coping methods:** Identify and apply useful coping methods for responding to stress and improving wellness
 - List ideas and strategies that can help participants through the situation.
- **Know the resources:** Identify and access available resources and sources of support
 - Provide contact numbers or other information of whom to get in touch with if someone needs help or support.



Slide 3

Stress is made apparent in a variety of ways as a person responds physically, mentally or emotionally to existing pressures or concerns. Each person is affected differently, and becoming familiar with common ways stress affects a person is helpful.

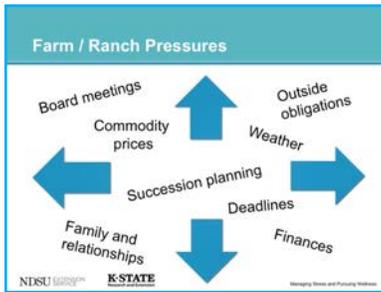
Discussion activity — How do you know you are feeling stressed? Encourage participants to list examples of “feeling stressed” that are physical, mental, emotional or social.



Slide 4

Each person who is affected by stress may respond physically, mentally or emotionally in different ways to such pressures. Conducting regular “self-checks” is important to be aware of your own experience with stress and what steps you can take to stay out of the “high stress” zone.

Personal application — Have participants privately assess where they might be in the “Stress Zone” on a scale of 1 to 10. Use Participant Handout 1, “The Farm/Ranch Stress Zone,” to explore this topic with participants.



Slide 5

Discussion activity — What are some of the unique pressures that occur in farming/ranching or rural areas that can result in feeling stressed?

Use Participant Handout 1, “The Farm/Ranch Stress Zone,” to explore this topic with participants.

Allow participants to respond and share some ideas **before** you progress the slide show to the remaining items on the slide (examples).

Some of the pressures that occur in the agricultural industry are unique and beyond a person’s control, which can be difficult and lead to feelings of frustration. Some of these unique pressures often beyond a person’s immediate control include weather difficulties that affect crops or livestock and market prices that vary without warning. Because of this pattern, focusing on what you **can do** to control how you respond to stressful conditions is important.

Farm/ranch stresses can come from many directions, including:

- Racing to town for something
- Machinery breaking down or related difficulties
- Storms or weather concerns
- Difficulty with spouse, children or parents
- Long hours, fatigue, getting worn out
- Meeting with the loan officer
- Conflict with family, partners, employees or others
- Physical or mental health concerns
- Prices for commodities, livestock



Slide 6

Rural stress can have a challenging effect on individuals and families due to the pressures that interact with each other.

Individuals and families who work in agriculture are tightly linked to the **agricultural system** (top circle), and pressures in the agricultural system then lead toward stresses on the farm financial situation and/or the family financial situation (right circle).

Economic stresses occurring in the farm financial setting and family financial setting (right circle) can raise challenges and stress levels for individuals, leading to heightened levels of personal stress that have physical, emotional and mental impacts (bottom right circle).

Individuals experiencing increased **personal stresses**, such as anxiety, depression or physical fatigue (bottom right circle), may find themselves having greater difficulties or conflict in their family or business relationships (bottom left circle).

Stresses or conflict experienced in **relationships with others** (bottom left circle) may generate further stresses or unhealthy outcomes, such as relationship difficulties, parenting difficulties, frustration or stress for children, or less involvement in the community (left circle).

A healthy response to stresses occurring due to challenges in agriculture is to pay attention to all aspects of this system and find coping strategies and resources that are useful in each area.

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



NDSU KSTATE
Managing Stress and Pursuing Wellness

Slide 7

The twin sources of **farm financial concerns** and **family financial challenges** can generate a lot of pressures that cause uncertainty, are difficult to manage and increase feelings of being frustrated or overwhelmed. Having a clear sense of why a person feels stressed based on what is occurring in each of these areas can be helpful.

Discussion activity — What are some of the specific issues that individual farmers/ranchers and their families deal with in the **farm financial situation** that can result in feeling stressed?

*Encourage participants in groups of three to four to discuss each category briefly and then share responses with the group. Allow participants to respond and share some ideas **before** you progress the slide show to the remaining items on the slide (examples).*

Possible Ideas — 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
- Dealing with factors outside your control, such as commodity prices
- Persistence of a problem — dealing with a challenging situation for an extended period of time

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)



NDSU KSTATE
Managing Stress and Pursuing Wellness

Slide 8

The twin sources of **farm financial concerns** and **family financial challenges** can generate a lot of pressures that cause uncertainty, are difficult to manage and increase feelings of being frustrated or overwhelmed. Having a clear sense of why a person feels stressed based on what is occurring in each of these areas can be helpful.

Discussion activity — What are some of the specific issues that individual farmers/ranchers and their families deal with in the **family financial situation** that can result in feeling stressed?

*Encourage participants in groups of three to four to discuss each category briefly and then share responses with the group. Allow participants to respond and share some ideas **before** you progress the slide show to the remaining items on the slide (examples).*

Possible Ideas — Family Financial Situation:

- Ability to meet family living expenses
- Stress of 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)



Slide 9

Signs of stress are **warning signals**, like the flashing red light on the dashboard of a car, that are warning you to pay attention, slow down and take steps to check for difficulty. These warning signals can occur in the physical, emotional, behavioral and relationship dimensions of a person’s life.

Application activity — Pages 8 and 9 of the NDSU Extension publication “Farming and Ranching in Tough Times” (FS1804) contain a “Stress Symptoms Checklist.” Encourage participants to take one to two minutes to look through this list and do a brief “temperature check” of where they might be with regard to stress and any symptoms that stand out. Explore each category of “stress signals” in the next two slides that follow (slides 8 and 9).

Resource link — www.ag.ndsu.edu/publications/kids-family/farming-and-ranching-in-tough-times/fs1804.pdf



Slide 10

Take a few minutes to explore the responses that participants identified as signals of stress in the **physical** and the **emotional/mental** dimensions of experience. Recognize that individuals may show signs of stress in different ways. For example, one person’s physical signs of stress may be stomach upset and fatigue while another person may have a severe or persistent headache. Also, one person may show emotional signals of stress by withdrawing from others while another person may become angry and irritable.



Slide 11

Take a few minutes to explore the responses that participants identified as signals of stress in the **behavioral** and the **relationship** dimensions of experience. Recognize that individuals may show signs of stress in different ways. For example, one person’s behavioral signs of stress may be difficulties with sleep and overeating while another person may increase use of alcohol or drugs (aspirin, sleep aids, other). Also, one person may show relationship signals of stress by getting into conflict with family members or others while another person may spend all his or her time working or doing other things and leave no time for relationships.



Slide 12

Having a process that you can use in managing the pressures that impact your family, your farming operation and your life in general is helpful. The Managing Rural Stress Model is designed to provide you with a process for thinking about the different stressors you may experience and strategies for managing them more effectively.

Each step of the Managing Rural Stress Model allows you to break down the process of dealing with stress concerns into a reflective process that you can use to identify and use effective resources and strategies. The five steps are: (1) assess needs and impacts, (2) identify and access resources, (3) pursue good-quality decisions, (4) connect with sources of support and (5) use effective coping strategies.

Personal application — Use Participant Handout 2, “Managing Rural Stress Model,” to explore this topic with participants. This handout accompanies slides 12 to 17.



Slide 13

Any “stressor” (source of stress) in a person’s life brings with it an impact on the life of the person, the family or the farming operation. This impact can be compared to the idea of throwing a pebble or rock in a pond, and a splash and waves result. So, first name and identify a key stressor.

Step 1 of the Managing Rural Stress Model involves identifying the needs resulting from stress in your life, family or farming operation. For example, due to long hours or interruptions to your sleep schedule, a need may be “more and restful sleep.” Next, assess the size of the impact occurring in your life or operation due to a stressor. Is it like dropping a pebble in your pond or throwing in a large rock? Finally, think of the impact on a continuum from “not at all manageable” to “very manageable.” Where does it fit on the continuum? Also, how can you move it on the continuum from less to more manageable?

Application activity — Use the *Managing Rural Stress worksheet (Handout 2)* to address Step 1 of the process. Encourage participants to take one to two minutes to reflect on their circumstances. Then have them list two to three needs related to the stressor. Next, have them list the size of the impact (small, medium or large) and also how manageable the impact is on a scale from 1 to 7.



Slide 14

To reduce or manage stress and meet identified needs, an important step is to identify and access available resources that can assist. Resources basically are defined as “what an individual has or can create to meet needs, goals or wants.” When a person has identified a particular need, such as being very thirsty, usually the person has particular resources he/she can identify that will be most helpful in meeting or reducing that need. For example, for the thirsty man in the photo, the resource that will be most helpful to him is water (or juice, milk, Gatorade, etc.).

Step 2 of the Managing Rural Stress Model involves identifying the resources that will be most helpful to you in managing a specified need or stress. Sometimes multiple resources can work together and be helpful. For example, if the need is more and restful sleep, resources might include a better pillow, a better sleep schedule, medicine to help with sleep difficulties, journaling, a warm shower, physical exercise, turning off the TV or other screens early, or a neck massage to help you relax and feel ready to rest.

To follow through on Step 2, identify what resources might be of particular help related to managing an identified need in your life or farming operation. Next, assess whether those particular resources are available to you, and if not, what might be necessary to get them. Resources may take a variety of forms, so next think creatively about the type of resources that might help. Personal and less tangible resources might include knowledge, creativity, optimism, cooperation with others, agreement, support from others or trust. Material resources might include money, land, labor, capital, equipment, professional help or organizations. Finally, think about how you can cultivate resourcefulness, which is the ability to recognize and use resources effectively.

Application activity — Use the *Managing Rural Stress worksheet (Handout 2)* to address Step 2 of the process. Encourage participants to take one to two minutes to reflect on their needs and available resources.

Then have them list one to two useful resources related to the need. Next, have them note if the resource is available, what type of resource will help and how they might access and use it effectively. Also, perhaps give participants a scenario (such as the sleep issue mentioned above) and see what resources they identify and list as small groups.



Slide 15

In the process of managing stresses, another step involves assessing the options and then making choices about how to respond. Being open to change or new possibilities helps. Individuals and families in farming and ranching face critical decisions about using resources to resolve concerns or reduce stresses. Here are some examples:

- How should we spend our time?
- Where should we put our money?
- Should we invest in new equipment or crop and livestock production strategies?
- Am I willing to visit with a professional about health concerns?

Step 3 of the Managing Rural Stress Model involves pursuing good-quality decisions and cultivating a mindset open to change. Perhaps you need to add a new commodity crop to your farming operation but have not used it before. Maybe you need to visit with a counselor but you feel uncertain about sharing your stresses with someone. To make good-quality decisions, several things can be helpful:

- Gather as much information as you need to feel informed and to enable you to make a good decision. Be open to new ideas and information.
- Assess the options that are available to you. What are the options for a decision? What are the pros and cons, or benefits and costs, associated with each particular option? Explore these options and how you feel about each one.
- As you move toward a decision, discuss it with others whom you trust, such as family members, close friends or professionals with expertise.
- Clarify the values you hold or goals that are relevant to guiding you in making a decision.
- Be open to the possibility of change because you may need to make decisions that are different from past experience or go against old habits you have developed.

Application activity — Use the *Managing Rural Stress worksheet (Handout 2)* to address Step 3 of the process. Encourage participants to take one to two minutes to reflect on possible decisions related to meeting a need. Then have them list information needed, possible options, who to discuss options with and related values or goals.



Slide 16

After assessing needs, identifying resources and exploring decisions, a key next step in the process of managing stresses is to reach out and connect with sources of support. This is important because typically, we are able to access resources or communicate about decisions we plan to make through connections with others. Identifying key sources of support and then connecting with those support sources helps us move forward and begin implementing strategies to manage or cope with stresses.

Step 4 of the Managing Rural Stress Model involves identifying and connecting with sources of support that can help you access resources, explore options or implement coping strategies. First, think about whether you are willing to approach others for support or resources. Sometimes, we need to overcome barriers that we set up for ourselves. Also, use the following approaches to take this step:

- Identify sources of support that are important to you or that are available to be accessed in your community or region. The source of support may need to “fit” with the need you are seeking to address. For example, an appropriate source of support for seeking a loan might be a bank or other financial lending institution, while an appropriate source for discussing feelings of stress in a relationship might be a pastor, counselor or close friend.
- Think about the type of social support that can be helpful to you. Typically, these include informal social support within one’s family relationships (spouse, parents, others), informal social support outside of one’s family (close friends, neighbors, fellow farmers) or formal social support (lenders, faith community leaders, community professionals).
- Seek out and establish connection with others who you can draw ideas, resources or support from in your situation.
- Talk with others to learn about how they might approach an issue and brainstorm ways to face or resolve a problem.
- Avoid gossip or judgmental attitudes about others in the community who may seek support.
- Establish small groups to network or support each in addressing key issues or stresses.

Application activity — Use the *Managing Rural Stress worksheet (Handout 2)* to address Step 4 of the process. Encourage participants to take one to two minutes to reflect on their possible sources of support. Then have them list one to two support sources related to the need they are addressing. Next, have them note if they are willing to reach out to the support source, and how informal and/or formal support sources might be helpful.

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!"

NDSU K-STATE

Slide 17

A final step in the process of managing stress requires a person to think about the strategies for using resources or coping with stresses that can be used and whether they are effective. A good example is thinking about the coping strategy “tools” that are available in a person’s toolbox. Often, we don’t have the tool that would be most useful in our current toolbox, so we may need help getting it from someone else or to learn how to use a new tool that works better in solving a problem than other tools. If one way a person handles stress is to overeat or self-medicate with alcohol or cigarettes, these are “tools” or “strategies,” but they are less effective options that could be replaced by a more effective option, such as daily exercise.

Step 5 of the Managing Rural Stress Model involves thinking about the coping strategies being used and if they are effective or whether other coping strategy tools need to be learned or sought for dealing with particular stresses. Although you may not practice the habit of taking a couple vacation every three months for a couple of days, perhaps that is a strategy that would be useful for a couple who is struggling to connect or communicate. To find and use effective coping strategies, several things can be helpful:

- Think about the ways you are seeking to manage stresses. What are you doing? Does the approach you are using have a helpful effect or a harmful effect?
- Think about matching the strategy you will use to a particular need. Perhaps you are used to handling all equipment concerns, but you have another person available who is competent in that area and this task could be delegated. So, the strategy of “delegate some tasks to another person to lighten the load” could be matched with the need of handling equipment concerns.
- Brainstorm and explore the variety of coping strategies available to be used. Focus on using strategies that are most effective and work for you and your circumstances.
- Learning new strategies or adopting different ways of managing stress that you have not used before may be necessary. Practices such as mindfulness can help in managing stress or changing the way you work and schedule time also can be examples. Being open to new coping practices is helpful.

Application activity — Use the *Managing Rural Stress worksheet (Handout 2)* to address Step 5 of the process. Encourage participants to take one to two minutes to reflect on possible coping strategies related to meeting a need or managing a concern. Then have them list possible strategies to use, what is being done and if it is working effectively, and if it should be continued or perhaps a change is needed.

Coping Methods

How many can your group list in 90 seconds?

NDSU K-STATE

Slide 18

Discussion activity — Ask participants to spend a few minutes in groups discussing what they observe as common coping methods that are perhaps negative ways to handle stress or less effective approaches to dealing with a concern. Each group can make a list to share or write down ideas on a large sheet of paper. Next, ask them to identify more positive coping methods for dealing with stress. Have participants engage in this discussion activity **before** showing the ideas that are listed on the following slide. Then ask each small group to share the ideas that it generated with the whole group.



Slide 19

Discussion activity — Ask participants to spend a few minutes in groups discussing what they observe as common coping methods that are perhaps negative ways to handle stress or less effective approaches to dealing with a concern. Each group can make a list to share or write down ideas on a large sheet of paper. Have participants engage in this discussion activity **before** showing the ideas that are listed on the current slide. Then ask each small group to share the ideas it generated with the whole group.

Discuss the ideas that have been shared. See if the ideas shared match up with some of the negative coping methods identified in the slide.

Personal application — Use Participant Handout 3, “My Coping Strategies Plan,” to explore this topic with participants. This handout accompanies slides 18 to 23.



Slide 20

Discussion activity — Ask participants to spend a few minutes in groups discussing what they observe as common coping methods that are positive ways to handle stress or more effective approaches to dealing with a concern. Each group can make a list to share or write down ideas on a large sheet of paper. Have participants engage in this discussion activity **before** showing the ideas that are listed on the current slide. Then ask each small group to share the ideas it generated with the whole group.

Discuss the ideas that have been shared. See if the ideas shared match up with some of the positive coping methods identified in the slide.

Available resources — Share any other available resources related to coping strategies, stress management, etc. Many resources are available in this area that can be of relevance.

Personal application — Use Participant Handout 3, “My Coping Strategies Plan,” to explore this topic with participants. This handout accompanies slides 18 to 23. Encourage participants to identify at least two strategies from each category to focus on for personal application.

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.”

NDSU K-STATE
Managing Stress and Pursuing Wellness

Slide 21

Among coping priorities, a few should receive emphasis. These will enable the individual farmer or rancher to cope better through time.

The first coping priority is to rest and renew one’s own well-being. As an example, a quote reminds us that, “Sustainable farming includes sustaining the farmer.”

A few key points to consider:

- You can’t care well for your farm or family if you don’t care for yourself. Self-care involves attention to your stress levels, engaging in activities such as consuming a healthful diet, getting enough sleep and exercise, and giving yourself time to renew your energy.
- Explore sources of personal renewal that you value and help you feed your spirit. Examples might include walking or hiking outside in nature,

engaging in faith practices or mindfulness, spending time on a hobby that interests you or catching some laughter through watching a funny movie.

- Build in personal “time outs,” or rest breaks, on a daily and weekly basis. The “Thrive with 5” initiative encourages people to take five-minute breaks during the day and reset their focus or energy. On a weekly basis, set aside time for breaks to spend time with family or connect with sources of support.
- Connect with others in your life who can lend strength and support to you. This might include family members, friends, spiritual leaders or community professionals.

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



How to Have Better Communication with Farm Employees

NDSU K-STATE
Managing Stress and Pursuing Wellness

Slide 22

Among coping priorities, a few should receive emphasis. These will enable the individual farmer or rancher to cope better through time.

A second coping priority is to focus on open, continuing and healthy communication. If you are feeling stress, simply bottling it up inside and not finding ways to process it can lead to emotional frustration and difficulties in communicating with others or making decisions. Healthy and regular communication with others helps short-circuit that cycle and helps the individual maintain a healthy pattern. A few key points to consider:

- Be willing to share your stresses or concerns with others. One of the largest obstacles to healthy communication is being unwilling to share with others due to feelings of pride, stubbornness or inadequacy. Seek to open yourself to talking with others.
- The process of talking or sharing with others helps a person explore ideas, see different perspectives, relieve stress and make better decisions. Identify others who understand your situation or who you feel able to trust and seek to talk and share with them.
- Listen to one another as part of the communication process. This may include listening to a spouse, parent, child, sibling, business partner, employee, counselor or others who can share ideas and support.
- Avoid anger or withdrawal as a primary mode of communication. These types of communication typically increase stress rather than help you cope with it.

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.”

NDSU K-STATE
Managing Stress and Pursuing Wellness

Slide 23

Among coping priorities, a few should receive emphasis. These will enable the individual farmer or rancher to cope better through time.

A third coping priority is to focus on relationships that are important to you and can help sustain you, particularly family relationships. Family and other relationships that are positive and healthy provide a large source of support, but they may become a drain if they are not maintained. A few key points to consider:

- Reassure family members and others you care about of your love and commitment. Stress on the farm can include long hours and limited family time, so sending messages of reassurance takes on greater importance.
- If conflicts with family members or others arise during times of stress, take time to work through any concerns and resolve stresses in the

relationship. Conflicts that are unresolved can become a continuing source of added stress.

- Follow consistent family routines that give security, such as family meals together or a daily cup of morning coffee with a spouse.
- Take time away together as a couple or family, adjusting for what is possible according to the circumstances in your farming or ranching operation. Getting away from immediate daily stresses can be very helpful to reflect on things with other family members, take some renewal time and return with new ideas or perspectives.



Slide 24

NDSU Extension provides several educational publications and resources designed to assist farm and ranch families in managing stress. Also, Extension offers publications on responding to individuals who are experiencing distress, providing support and making a referral for professional support if needed.

Personal application — Use *Participant Handout 4, “My Farming Resource Network,”* to explore this topic with participants. This handout accompanies slides 21 to 23. Encourage participants to use the handout to record information on resources that they might access or use in the process of responding to farm and family stresses. First, ask them to begin by listing at least two to three contacts in the category of “Family, Friends and Neighbors.” Next, ask them to list at least two contacts in the category of “Agencies and Organizations.” Encourage participants to keep the handout and continue adding to it and then use it as a resource for connecting with varied sources of support.



Slide 25

A variety of organizations furnish useful educational resources designed to assist farm and ranch families in managing stress. The resources cited here include online publications and websites, educational videos and apps that can be useful in exploring the topic of managing stress in farm and ranch situations.

Slide 26

If an individual feels a need to access mental health supports or services, or if a person feels concern about an individual he/she knows who is under stress and may have difficulty coping or is suicidal, the resources listed here provide a starting point for information in North Dakota. Other states should identify helplines or other resources of use in that state.

Lesson evaluation — Encourage participants to fill out the program evaluation form and share it with the program facilitator.



Developed by North Dakota State University Extension and used with permission of the authors and NDSU. Publications from Kansas State University are available at: www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu. Date shown is that of publication or last revision. Contents of this publication may be freely reproduced for educational purposes. Credit Sean Brotherson and Lindy Berg, *Managing Stress and Pursuing Wellness in Times of Tight Margins, Facilitator's Guide*, Kansas State University, June 2018.

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

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

MF3409

June 2018

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, as amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating, John D. Floros, Director.