

MENTAL HEALTH AND THE IMPACT ON WELLNESS

For Farm Families



Many of the factors that affect agricultural production are largely beyond the control of the producer. Good health, including mental health, is a key factor that contributes to one's ability to keep farming.

Twenty percent of any population has mental health complications, including farmers and ranchers. Stigma and privacy concerns associated with mental health issues may mean that many people do not seek out available behavioral health services.

SYMPTOMS OF POOR MENTAL HEALTH

- Persistent worry and fear
- Apprehension and uneasiness
- Avoidance of others
- Feeling sad
- Lack of interest or pleasure in activities
- Significant weight change or changes in appetite
- Problems sleeping
- Slow or fidgety body movements
- Low energy
- Difficulty concentrating
- Frequent thoughts of death or suicide
- Substance misuse
- Unexplained changes in physical appearance or behavior

EXPERIENCING ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS?

Take the Two Question Self-Assessment Tool:

1. During the past two weeks, have you often been bothered by feeling down, depressed, or hopeless?

Yes No

2. During the past two weeks, have you often been bothered by little interest or pleasure in doing things?

Yes No

*If you have a positive response to either of these questions, consider talking to your health care provider about further assessment. You can also access self-screening tools by visiting

<http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/mental-health-screening-tools>



WHEN YOU TALK TO YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER:

- Be pro-active; ask about potential signs of stress, anxiety, or depression
- Speak openly about stressful issues in your work and home life
- Be familiar with your family medical history related to depression or other contributing behavioral issues
- List any prescribed and over-the-counter medications you take
- Be aware of smoking habits and alcohol intake
- Inquire about a referral to a mental health specialist
- Know what your insurance coverage may (or may not) be for evaluation of mental health care

FACTORS IMPACTING WELLNESS

STRESS is our response to anything that threatens our physical, emotional or financial health or survival. A stressor is an event, series of events that harms or threatens an individual and causes him or her to respond. When we suffer from too much stress, for too long a period of time, it is called distress. Persistent, extended periods of negative stress can precede other issues impacting mental wellness. It is often difficult for people to distinguish between depression and stress.

DEPRESSION is a disorder that affects the biochemical balance of the brain and causes symptoms such as low energy level, sadness, physical impairments, low self-esteem and problems thinking. Depression may be diagnosed when multiple symptoms are present for more than two weeks.

ANXIETY disorders are the most common of all behavioral health conditions. Anxiety includes fears, apprehensive mood, feelings of dread and worried thoughts and behaviors. Some types of anxiety disorders include panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive - compulsive disorder, and phobias. Untreated anxiety can lead to depression, substances abuse and poor self-esteem.

SUICIDE comments should never be discounted. Always respond immediately. **If you or someone you know is contemplating suicide, call 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433) or 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).**

ASSISTANCE WITH MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES:

For a medical or life-threatening emergency, call 9-1-1

Mental Health America -
www.mentalhealthamerica.net

US Department of Health and Human Services -
Toll-free Crisis Hotline: 1-800-273-8255



FOR AGRICULTURAL POPULATIONS, STRESSFUL EVENTS MIGHT INCLUDE:

- Financial concerns (ie: equipment purchases, borrowing for farm operations, mortgages or rent, insurance)
- Personal or family concerns (ie: death of someone close, illness, marital relationships, family demands)
- Work-related injuries
- Change in farm policies
- Chemical exposure
- Loss of crop or livestock
- Weather

WARNING SIGNS INDICATING A PERSON MAY BE AT RISK TO HARM SELF OR OTHERS INCLUDE:

- ✓ Talk of suicide
- ✓ Changes in sleep and/or eating patterns
- ✓ Stopped taking medication as prescribed or hoarding medication
- ✓ Increased use of drugs or alcohol
- ✓ Preoccupation with death
- ✓ Making last arrangements, giving away possessions
- ✓ Obtaining firearms
- ✓ Withdrawal from family, friends and routines that were pleasurable
- ✓ Aggressive and disruptive behavior
- ✓ Increased irritability and criticism
- ✓ History of suicide of family member or friend

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