



Farm Stress Hits Home – Drought & Mental Health

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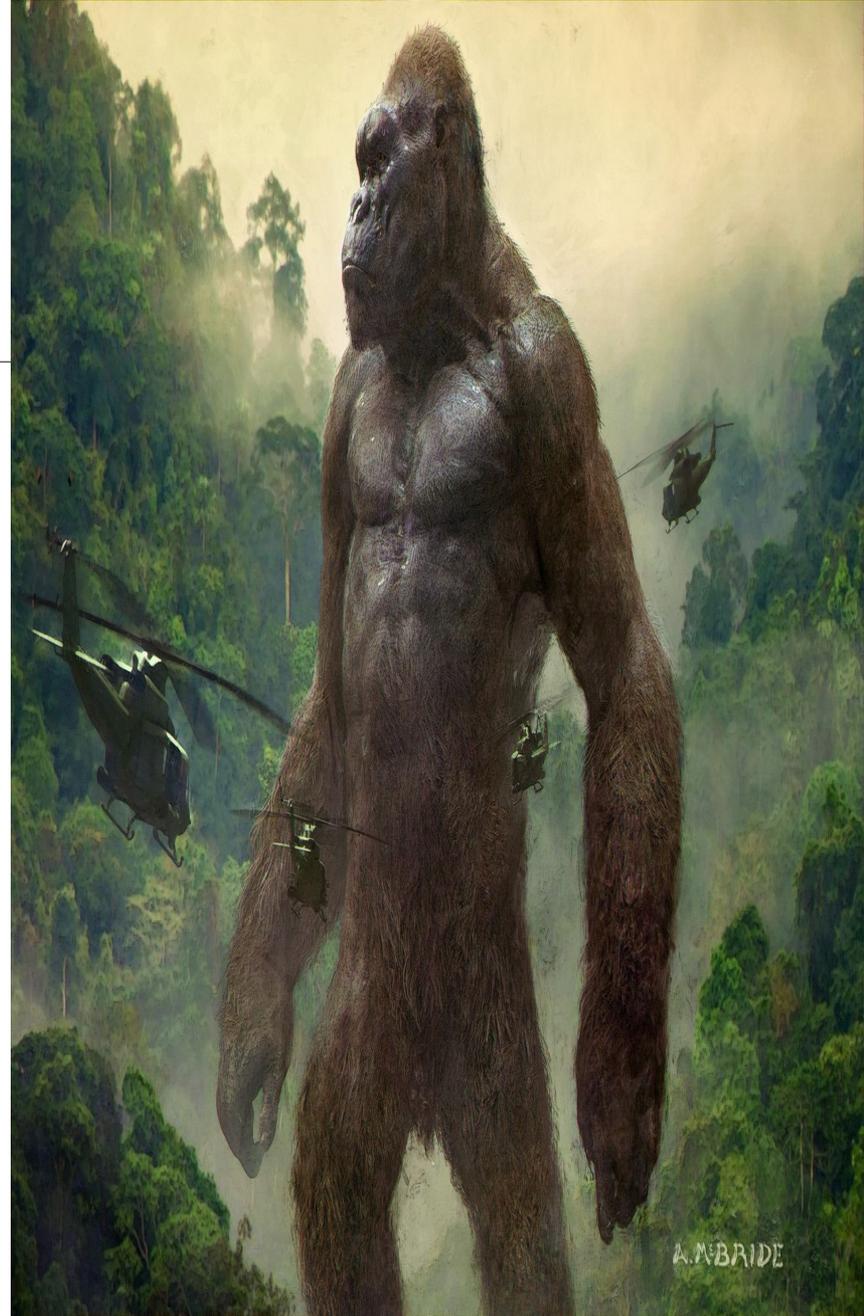
Upper Missouri River Basin –

Farming ranks in the
top ten most stressful occupations
in the United States.



Why So Much Stress?

- ❖ King Kong-size Sources of rural stress
- ❖ Weather – drought
- ❖ Prices – crop prices drop by a third to half
- ❖ Costs – fuel costs; fertilizer costs rise



“Last of the Water” – Clark Price





Sorry, this episode is not currently available on BBC iPlayer Radio

Farming Today This Week: Mental Health

One in four people in the UK are affected by serious mental ill-health, and it seems farmers are particularly at risk. The most recent available government statistics show that in 2014 forty-one farmers took...

🕒 27 minutes

England



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Australia

India

a



New Zealand



Managing Stress on the Farm

Brainstorming Break

- ❖ **What are you seeing as key issues related to the topic of farm & ranch stress in your areas?**

Rural Stress and Individual / Family Wellness



Farmers and Suicide Risk – Key Issue

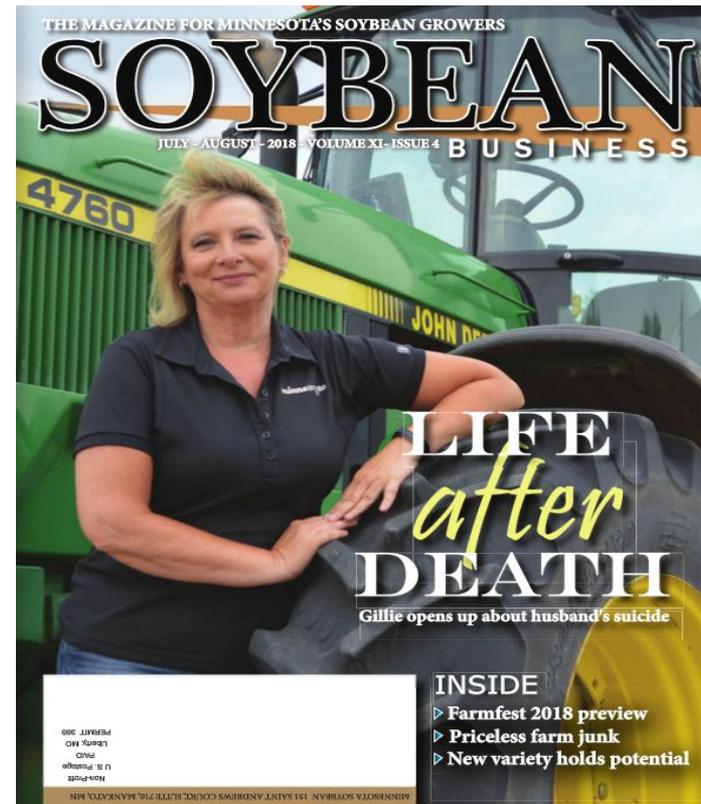
Increased attention to the issue of **farm stress and suicide rates** among farmers

Suicide rate of **farmers high among occupational groups**

“Preventing Farmer Suicide: Collaboration and Communication” (5 minutes)

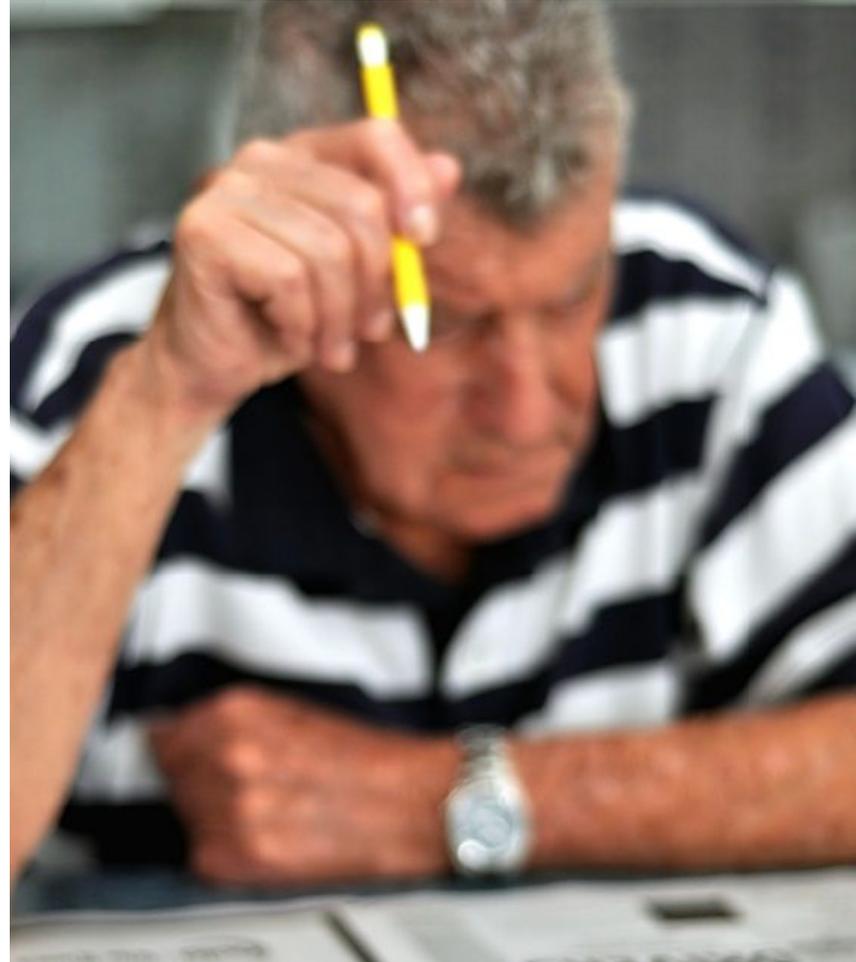
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPDlyVAkeEo>

(RHIHub – UND)



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)

Implications of Rural Stress Perceptions for Mental Health

- ◆ Most surveyed attribute the crisis to factors beyond their control (weather, market price, farm policy).
- ◆ Factors beyond one's control may create a sense of challenges beyond resolution.
- ◆ Resulting feelings = helplessness, victimization, anger, isolation, depression.

...Otherwise, a recipe for mental, emotional, behavioral and relational health

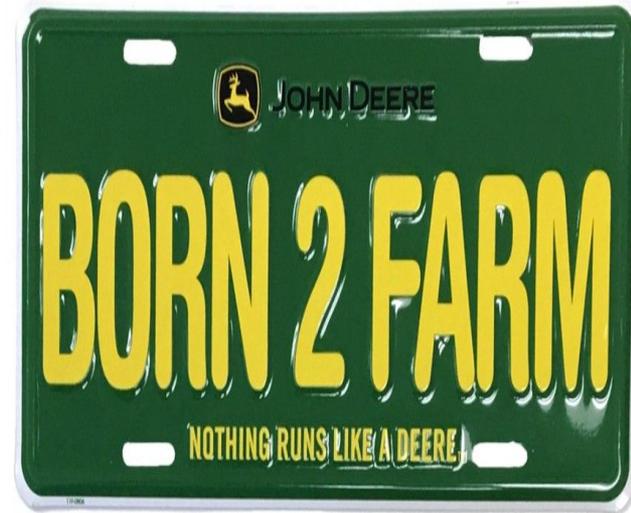
Why is Rural Stress Hard on Individuals?

- ❖ Individual levels of stress are linked to how a person perceives the source of stress - their orientation to the stressor.
- ❖ Many persons see it not as a change of job, but as a loss of self.
- ❖ Many practice the 11th Commandment orientation - **“Thou shalt farm!”**



What is Another Issue? The “Born to Farm” Mindset . . .

- ❖ The impact of a farming or ranching economic crisis on families is about more than making money; it is about the continuance of a generational way of life that is rooted in history.
- ❖ This is known as the “agrarian imperative” – “born to farm” mindset
- ❖ This requires more than a “technical” solution (an infusion of income).



Which Matters More? Tractor Maintenance vs. Farmer Maintenance



"THEY MAINTAIN THEIR TRACTORS, THEY
MAINTAIN THEIR PUMPS AND EVERYTHING
BUT THEY DON'T MAINTAIN THEMSELVES."

Harry, male farmer on farmer's mental health
in Judd, et al, 2006

#ElevateTheConvo

Photo Credit Derek Gavey

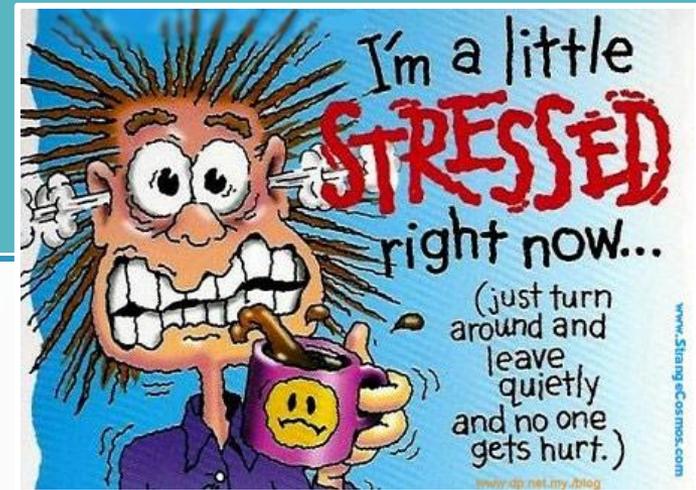
Key Messages on Rural Stress

- Your health is your most important asset as a farmer, rancher or agricultural worker.
- Farmer and farmworker health and safety is the most important priority in managing any farm or ranch operation.
Good stress management is good farm management!

Your Health = Your Horsepower



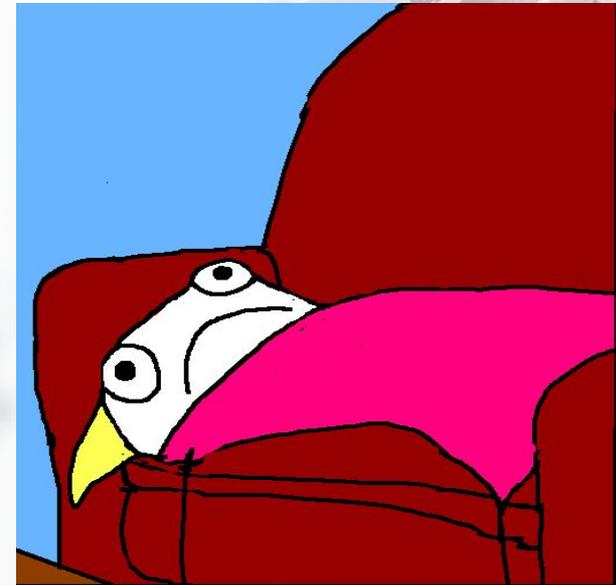
What is Stress?



Stress definition:

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

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



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

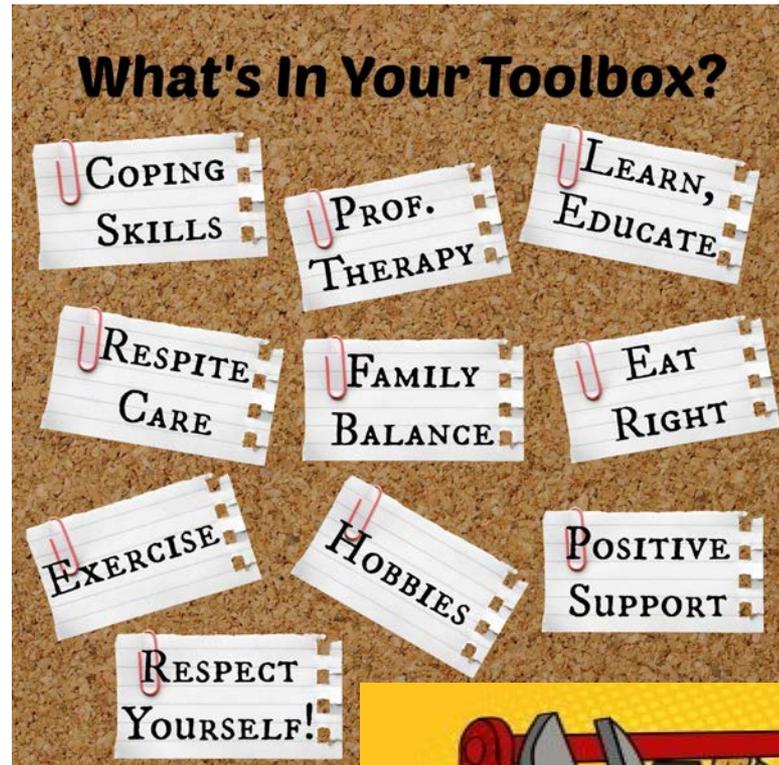
- Communication difficulties
- Conflict with family members, others
- Lack of satisfaction
- Verbal or physical outbursts, abuse
- Strained interactions
- Avoiding others
- Lack of time with spouse, children, others

Managing Stresses

Use Effective Coping Strategies

Coping Strategies – What's in your toolbox?

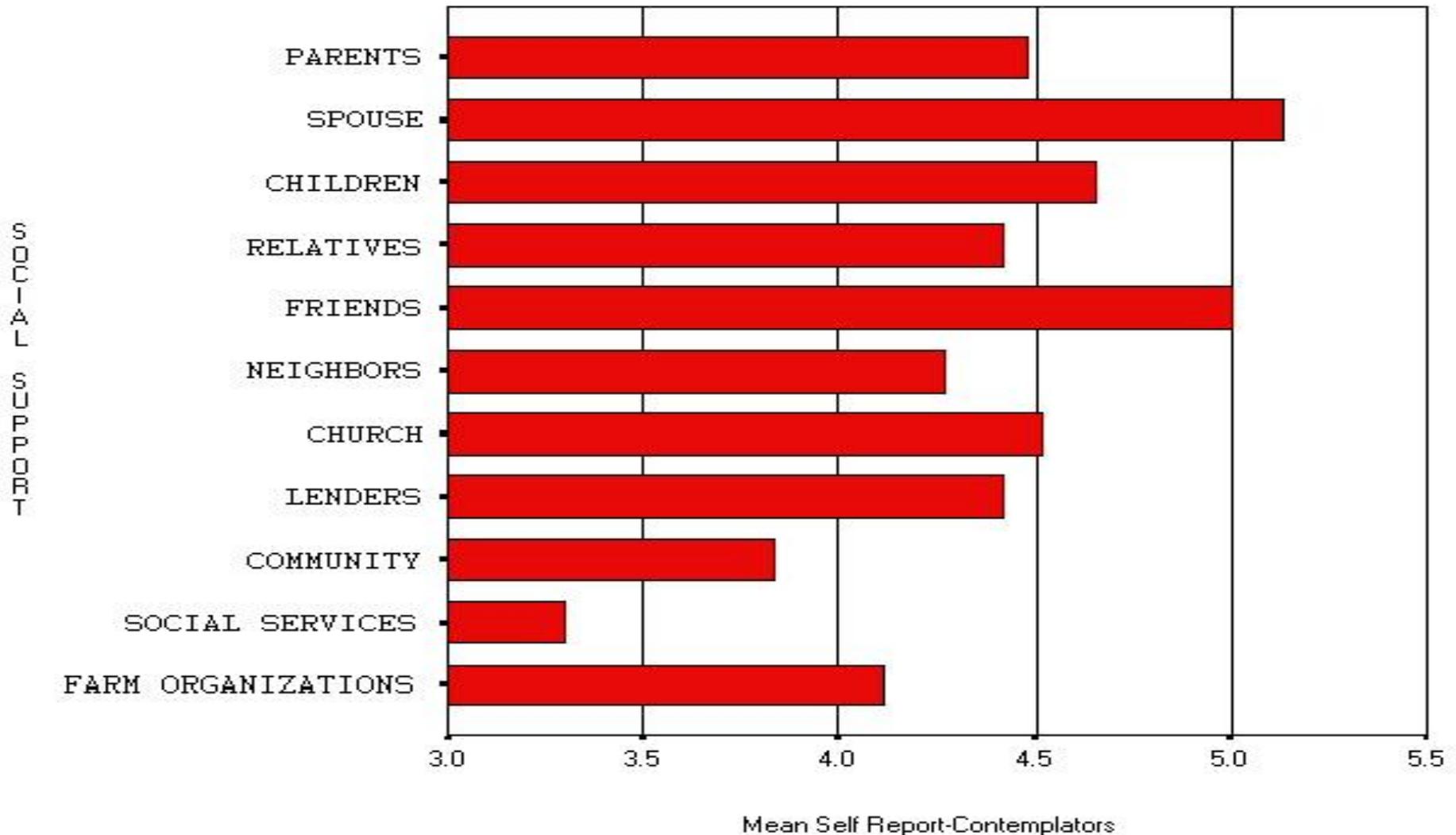
“Tools are designed to do very different jobs. Find the right coping strategy (tool) to fit the situation, and remember to change strategies (tools) if the one you are using isn't working!”



Responding to Rural Stress

- **Development of Social Support** - Does the family take steps to build social support both internally and externally? How can this be fostered?
 - Within-family social support
 - Other sources of informal social support
 - Formal social support

Where Do Farmers Get Social Support?



Asking for Help – How to Make It Easier

- Build rapport – people are more likely to ask for help from someone they trust and perceive as warm, empathetic, and genuine.
- Confidentiality is key.
- Avoid labels or minimizing the situation.
- Know your resources and **be prepared to refer**.
- **Always follow up**.

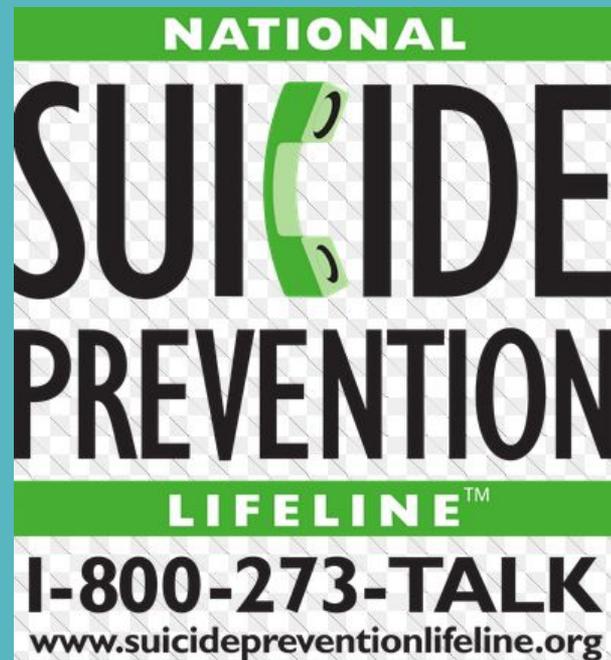
Where to get help?

- Visit your doctor. Just get checked!
- Seek counseling with a mental health professional.
- Call 2-1-1 for confidential listening and support, in addition to information and referral. Call specialists are trained in crisis intervention, including suicide intervention.



Managin

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline



What is the North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center?



Funded by a USDA Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network grant, North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center is composed of lead agencies representing 12 states. We want to make sure that you, your family, and the people you work with have access to the resources needed, when they are needed. We believe in working together to cultivate rural supports, mental health resources, and community to help farmers, ranchers, and other agriculture workers as they navigate increasing stress.

North Central FRSAN Resources - Online

Training & Professional
Services



Resource
Clearinghouse



Telephone
Helplines



Support
Groups



□ Online: www.farmstress.org

NDSU Extension + Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center

New 3-Year Project

- NDSU Extension
- Lutheran Social Services (counseling options)
- FirstLink (suicide prevention & mental health training)
 - Mental Health First Aid
 - Online suicide prevention training
 - Educational workshops



Farm Stress Management Resources

- Training in **Mental Health First Aid**
- Two deliverable workshops – MSU
 - **Communicating with Farmers Under Stress**
 - **Weathering the Storm in Agriculture: How to Cultivate a Productive Mindset**

Information Online

- NDSU Extension – Related Websites
 - Farm/Ranch Stress
 - <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/farmranchstress>
 - Drought Stress
 - <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/drought>
 - Mental and Behavioral Health Resources
 - <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/cff/resources-for-emotional-and-mental-health>

Peer Support Efforts

- Farmer to Farmer Discussion Groups
 - Proactive emphasis on marketing, management, integrating wellness into management practices



Be an **AgSafe** Family this Autumn!

Mental health – talk about it.

**ON-FARM
AUTUMN SAFETY TIPS**

Be an **AgSafe
FAMILY**

CASA | ACSA
CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF SAFETY ASSOCIATIONS
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DE SECURITE AGRICOLE

Programs at a Distance

- Wellness Coaching (THRIVE Montana)
- Telehealth options
- Podcast series

FIND YOUR PATH TO WELLNESS.

Are Worth It.

Discover what makes you thrive through group and individual coaching.

QUESTIONS? CALL 994-5497
or email healthadvancement@montana.edu



MONTANA
STATE UNIVERSITY

Office of
Health Advancement

Connect with Others via Their Stories – TransFarmation Podcast

The TransFarmation Podcast series – by MN Dept.
of Agriculture; Red River Valley Farm Network

<https://www.rrfn.com/transfarmation/>



Join the FarmStrong Initiative

New Zealand FarmStrong Initiative –
focus on living well in agriculture

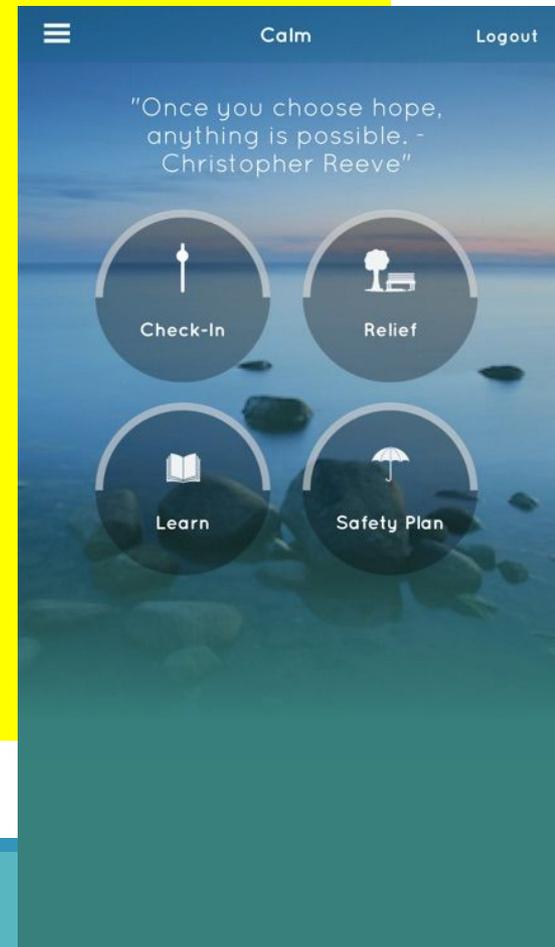
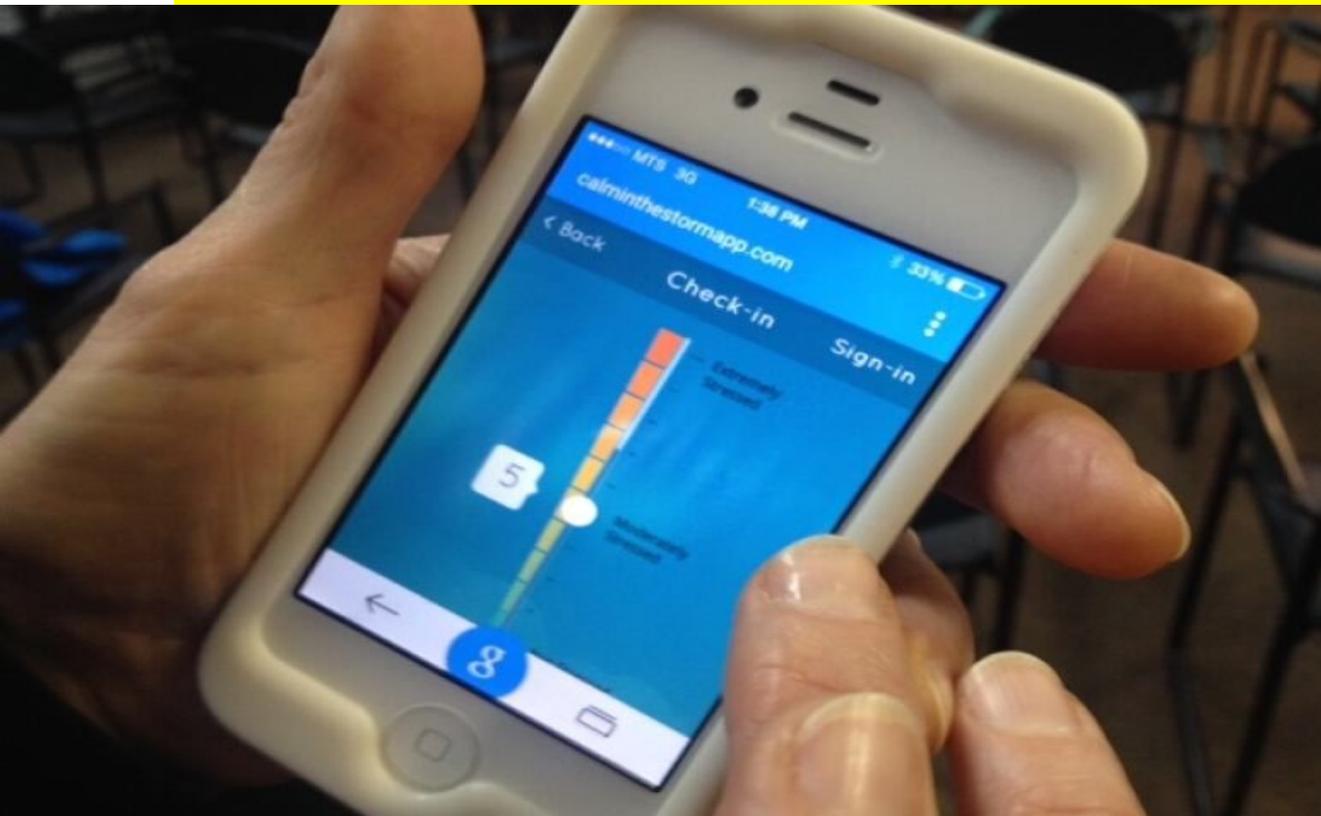
<https://farmstrong.co.nz/>

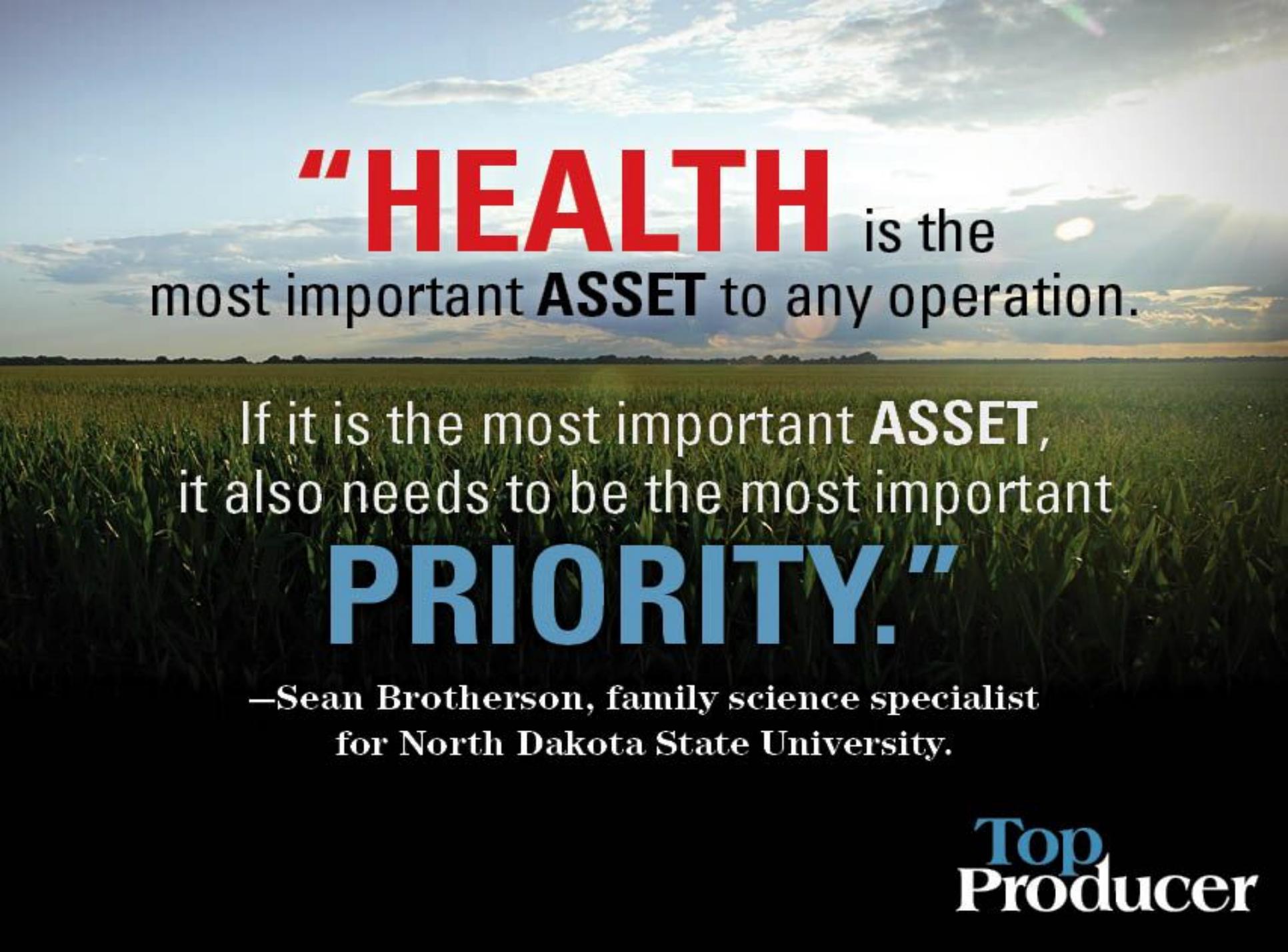


There's An App for That . . .

Calm in the Storm – Mobile Stress app

<http://calminthestormapp.com/>





“HEALTH is the
most important **ASSET** to any operation.

If it is the most important **ASSET**,
it also needs to be the most important
PRIORITY.”

—Sean Brotherson, family science specialist
for North Dakota State University.

Top
Producer

NDSU Extension Response to Farmers Under Stress



Support Sources – What can we do?

- Sean Brotherson, Ph.D., Extension Family Life Specialist
- Email: sean.brotherson@ndsu.edu
- 702.231.6143

