Stress on the Farm

Kate Downes
Outreach Director, NY FarmNet

Produce Safety Educator’s Call #50
November 2, 2020
Instructions

• All participants are muted.
• There will be time for questions and discussion at the end of the meeting.
• This session will be recorded and the presentation will be shared via the listserv and on our website after the call.
Speaker Introduction

Kate Downes
Outreach Director,
NY Farm Net
Stress on the farm

Kate Downes, NY FarmNet
Outline

- What is stress?
- Stress on the farm
- Signs and symptoms of stress
- Managing stress
- Managing conversations
- Relationship between chronic stress and suicide
- Resources
The land means everything to farmers... Losing the family farm is the ultimate loss.

MICHAEL ROSMANN, PH.D
Challenges in Accessing Care

STIGMA ATTACHED WITH SEEKING HELP FOR MENTAL HEALTH

28% of rural adults say it is difficult to access a therapist, treatment for substance use disorders (28%), and a support group in their local community (29%).

A majority of rural adults agree the cost (70%), embarrassment (65%), and stigma (63%) would be an obstacle if they were seeking help or treatment for a mental health condition.

Source: Morning Consult, for American Farm Bureau Federation, 2019
What is stress?

A need or demand people confront, that is perceived as burdensome or threatening, and can lead to physical or mental health problems.

What is stress?

- Fear of the unknown
- Feeling of loss
  - What we do is who we are, and the tie to the land
  - Fear and frustration of not being in control
  - Fear of what comes next
  - Feeling of failure
  - Holding the hands, and legacy, of previous generations
Stress on the farm

- WEATHER
- LARGE DEBT LOADS
- MACHINERY BREAKDOWN
- CROP YIELD
- WORKING WITH FAMILY
- GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS
- HIGH INTEREST RATES
- LIVESTOCK ILLNESS
- COMMODITY PRICES
Signs + Symptoms of Stress

**PHYSICAL**
- Headaches
- Stomach issues
- Increased blood pressure
- Clenched teeth
- Muscle tension
- Sudden perspiration
- Rapid heart beat

**EMOTIONAL**
- Impatience
- Yelling more
- Frustration
- Depression
- Angry blow-ups
- Anxious
- Difficulty controlling emotions

**BEHAVIORAL**
- Increased substance use
- Difficulty adapting to change
- Verbal abuse
- Increased sarcasm or anger
- Communication problems
- Physical abuse
- Difficulty relaxing
- Difficulty falling/staying asleep
Signs + Symptoms of Chronic Stress

- Change in routines
- Care of livestock declines
- Decreased/increased farmstead appearance
- Increase in illness and/or injury
- Excessive sleeping or insomnia
- Obsessive or compulsive or impulsive behaviors
- Excessive weight gain or loss
- Constant feelings of being overwhelmed or overloaded
How to Handle Stress

- Clear your mind
- Talk about your thoughts and feelings
- Eat a healthy diet
- Remind yourself of your strengths and values
- Clean up your sleep hygiene

- Relax and meditate
- Focus on the present moment
- Exercise regularly
- Find something you enjoy doing, and do it
- Set boundaries.
- Learn when, and how, to say NO.
Managing difficult conversations
Proper Mind Set

DO YOU HAVE EMPATHY?
They don't need sympathy.

CAN YOU help them think, discover, analyze, and LIVE WITH possible outcomes of decisions to be made?

DO YOU KNOW ALL OF THE ANSWERS?
What is the likely response if you don't?

MORE IMPORTANTLY What decisions need to be made?
Goal: Open, Honest Dialogue

PRESERVE THE RELATIONSHIP - OPENING UP FOR CONVERSATION

• Tell the facts and impacts on yourself and others, without judgment or blame.
• Explain the outcome you want.
• Ask for other views: How do you see the situation? What am I missing?
Goal: Open, Honest Dialogue

CREATE SAFETY - LISTENING

• Dialogue=open, honest communication
• Probe: Can you tell me more?
• Restate: Is this what you said?
• Paraphrase: In other words, I'm hearing ____. Did I get that right?
• Summarize: From what you're saying, I sense you're feeling ____, is that right?
• Reframe: I'm hearing that you'd like ____ to happen, right?
Goal: Open, Honest Dialogue

DEVELOP A SHARED PURPOSE - RESOLVING

• Commit to stay in dialogue by asking, "Are you willing to....?"
• Uncover other's interests, the reasons behind the position each is taking. Ask "why do you want that?"
• Reframe a mutual purpose with the both and thinking. "How can we satisfy both your needs and mine?"
• Brainstorm both/and solutions
Communicating through conflict

• Ask open ended questions.
• Describe the facts and impacts on yourself and others without judgment or blame.
• Explain the outcome needed.
• Ask often for the other person's views.
• Ask for clarification whenever in doubt.
• Restate: Is this what you said, or meant?
• Paraphrase what you are hearing.
• Reframe the situation with a mutual purpose.
• Brainstorm to come up with an accurate assessment of what is truly needed.
• Develop an action plan.
• Summarize what you both agreed on.
• Written follow-up communication.
**Phrases you might use in active listening**

| I can see that the current situation is hard for you. What changes would you like to see? | I am glad to help you; I know you are going through some tough challenges. Tell me what I can do to help. |
| I hear you saying _______________. | It sounds like you are thinking that ______. |
Stressful Situations - What to do

• I know of several farms in similar situations.
• Every situation is a little different. Help me understand better.
• Have you thought about _______?
• I could maybe help with ________.
• I think that if we ______________.
• This new idea might _____________. What do you think?
• Let's write down some of the pros and cons.
Stressful Situations

- People under stress typically don't process things as well as expected. They're 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 with written communication reviewing the discussion is critical.
Relationship between chronic stress and suicide
Language to use when talking about suicide

DIED BY SUICIDE
SUICIDED
TOOK THEIR OWN LIFE

Never

COMMITTED
SUCCESSFUL
Farmer Demographics

United States Farmer Demographics

- Average age of farmer is 57
- 2.7 million farmers are 45+
- 2.1 million producers are male; 1.2 million are female
- 3.2 million producers are white
- 2.04 million farms
- 900.2 million acres in farming

NY Farmer Demographics

- 33,400 farms in operation in NYS (USDA-NASS, 2017)
- Average age is 55
- 39,537 fall into the 45+ age group
- 57,865 farmers
- 35,985 male
- 21,880 female
- 57,155 are white

(USDA-NASS, 2017)
Suicide in the United States

- Rate of suicide is highest among middle-aged white men
- In 2018, the suicide rates were higher among adults ages 45 to 54 years (20.04 per 100,000) and 55 to 64 years (20.20 per 100,000), with the rate highest among adults ages 52 to 59 years (21.56 per 100,000).
- White males accounted for 69.67% of suicide deaths in 2018
- 10th leading cause of death in the US
- In 2018, men died by suicide 3.56x more often than women
- In 2018, firearms accounted for 50.57% of all suicide deaths

(American Foundation for Suicide Prevention)
Risk factors

- Mental disorders, particularly mood disorders, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, and certain personality disorders
  - 46% of people who die by suicide have a known mental health condition.
- Family history of suicide
- Substance abuse/use disorder
- Intoxication. More than 1 in 3 people who suicided are under the influence of alcohol at the time of death.
- Hopelessness
- Impulsive and/or aggressive tendencies
- Previous suicide attempts
- Exposure to others who have died by suicide (in real life or via the media)
- Access to firearms
- A serious or chronic medical illness
- Gender
- A history of trauma or abuse
- Prolonged stress
- A recent tragedy or loss
- Job or financial loss
- Loss of relationships
- Local clusters of suicide
- Lack of social support and sense of isolation
- Lack of healthcare, especially mental health and substance abuse treatment
- Cultural and religious beliefs
Suicide Warning Signs

• Talking or writing about suicide or death
• Feeling hopeless, trapped, or like a burden
• Giving away prized possessions
• Making a plan, acquiring means
• Saying goodbyes
• Isolation from others
• Loss of interest
• Mood change
• Acting recklessly
• Increased substance use
• Sleep changes
• Being anxious or agitated
How do you ask someone about suicide?

Ask them directly if they are thinking of suicide.

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 they say yes?

- Take them seriously
- Ask if they have a plan and a means
- Stay with them - do not leave them alone
- Call for help
- Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255
- Text TALK to 741-741 to text with a trained crisis counselor at the Crisis Text Line
- Call 911
What if they don't want help?

• Use probing questions to try to discover the reasons why not.
  ◦ Maybe they're concerned about finances or not having a doctor they like.
• You may be the person to help them overcome that worry about seeking help.
• Let them know that if they change their mind, that you'll be there for them in the future.
• Respect their decision
Do

- **Be direct.** Talk openly and matter of factly about suicide. Ask if they have a plan for how they would kill themselves.
- **Be non-judgemental.** Don't debate the value of life, minimizing their problems, or give advice.
- **Get involved.** Be available. Show interest and support.
- **Offer hope** that alternatives are available.
- **Take action.** Remove means, like weapons or pills.
- **Get help** from people or agencies specializing in crisis intervention and suicide prevention.
Don't

• Don't dare them to do it.
• Don't act shocked. This will put distance between you.
• Don't be sworn to secrecy. Seek support.
• Don't debate whether suicide is right or wrong.
• Don't fidget or pace.
• Don't tell them to "calm down" or "don't cry"
Resources

• National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
• National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Crisis Chat: https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/
• Veterans Crisis line: 1-800-273-8255
• Crisis Text Line: Text TALK to 741-741
• NY FarmNet (NY only): 1-800-547-3276 or www.nyfarmnet.org
• Iowa State University, Iowa Concern 24-hour hotline: 1-800-447-1985
• Center for Rural Affairs (NE): https://www.cfra.org
• Minnesota Farm & Rural Helpline: 833-600-2670 ext 1 or text FARMSTRESS to 898211
• Farm Aid 1-800-327-6243
• LGBTQ National Help Center 1-888-843-4564
• Vermont Farm First 1-877-493-6216
HOW TO REFER A FARMER TO NY FARMNET

- If you notice someone needs help, ask them.
- Listen and acknowledge what the farmer is saying.
- Introduce NY FarmNet as a totally free, totally confidential service.
- Leave printed NY FarmNet materials with them.
- Encourage them to call 1-800-547-3276 or fill out the online contact form at www.nyfarmnet.org
NY FarmNet
1-800-547-3276 | www.nyfarmnet.org

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Next Meeting

• Trainer Refresher Webinar Series
• Thursdays, 12-1 PM

• Next session – Nov. 5, 2020 Module 5.2

Schedule:
All meetings will be at 12 PM ET

- Oct. 1 – Module 1: Introduction to Produce Safety
- Oct. 8 – Module 2: Worker Health, Hygiene, and Training
- Oct. 15 – Module 3: Soil Amendments
- Oct. 22 – Module 4: Wildlife, Domesticated Animals, and Land Use
- Oct. 29 – Module 5-1: Agricultural Water – Production Water
- Nov. 5 – Module 5-2: Agricultural Water – Postharvest Water
- Nov. 12 – Module 6: Postharvest handling and Sanitation
- Nov. 19 – Module 7: How to develop a Farm Food Safety Plan
• No meeting in December – Happy Holidays!
• Next meeting TBD, likely January 2021
• Submit other topics for discussion to the PSA Team
The PSA Website
http://produc safetyalliance.cornell.edu/
En español: es.produc safetyalliance.cornell.edu