

Agricultural
Mental Health Awareness
on Stress, Depression & Suicide



Objectives

- **What is Good Mental Health?**
- **Understanding Agricultural Challenges including Stress, Depression & Suicide**
- **Signs and Symptoms**
- **Risk Factors/Contributing factors**
- **How to Respond**
- **Resources**



What is Good Mental Health?

- A state of well-being
- Realizing one's abilities
- Coping with normal stresses of life (e.g. fender bender, overwhelming work week, equipment trouble, etc.)
- Working productively and fruitfully
- Ability to contribute to one's community
- Meaningful interpersonal relationships



Agricultural Challenges

- Agricultural work is very stressful, unpredictable and dangerous for the entire family.
- Agricultural workers, including farmers, ranchers, migrant/seasonal workers, fishers, foresters, their families and communities dependent upon agriculture, often find it difficult to obtain behavioral health care they need to deal with these perils.
- Behavioral health services such as addictions treatment, mental health therapy and marital and family counseling are often scarce in rural areas
- Unpredictable climate and economic changes
- American farmers and ranchers are facing a 50 percent decline in net farm income since 2013.



Signs of Stress

- Fatigue
- Poor memory or concentration
- Irritability
- Poor motivation or energy
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Gastrointestinal issues
- Lack of interest
- Feeling void
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Inability to stay on task



Stress can lead us to Depression



Depression Risk Factors:

- **Ongoing, unrelieved stress**
- Illness that is life threatening, chronic or associated with pain
- Medical conditions
- Side effects of medication
- Recent childbirth
- Premenstrual changes in hormone levels
- Lack of exposure to bright light in winter
- Chemical (neurotransmitter) imbalance
- Substance misuse; intoxication, withdrawal



Signs of Depression

(Major depressive disorder lasts for at least 2 weeks, affecting a person's ability to Live, Laugh, Love, Learn, Labor)

- Physical
- Behavioral
- Psychological



Physical:

- Fatigue
- Lack of energy
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Overeating or loss of appetite
- Constipation
- Weight loss or gain
- Headaches
- Irregular menstrual cycle
- Loss of sexual desire
- Unexplained aches and pains

Behavioral:

- Crying spells
- Withdrawal from others
- Neglect of responsibilities
- Loss of interest in personal appearance
- Loss of motivation
- Slow movement
- Use of drugs and alcohol

Psychological:

- Sadness
- Anxiety
- Guilt
- Anger
- Mood swings
- Lack of emotional responsiveness
- Feelings of helplessness
- Hopelessness
- Irritability
- Frequent self-criticism
- Self-blame
- Pessimism
- Impaired memory and concentration
- Indecisiveness and confusion
- Tendency to believe others see one in a negative light
- Thoughts of death and suicide

Untreated depression can
lead us to suicidal thoughts



Suicide Risk Factors

- Gender
- Age
- Occupation
- Chronic physical/emotional pain
- Untreated mental illness
- Having lost someone to suicide
- Use of alcohol or other substances
- Less social support
- Legal Issues
- **Thwarted Belongingness**
- **Perceived Burdensomeness**
- **Fearlessness**
- Feeling trapped
- Hopelessness/Helplessness
- **Previous attempt**
- **Organized plan**



Signs of Suicide

- Direct Verbal Clues, Indirect Verbal Clues, Detached Verbal Clues
- Behavioral Clues
- Situational Clues



Direct Verbal Clues

- “I’ve decided to kill myself.”
- “I wish I were dead.”
- “I’m going to commit suicide.”
- “I’m going to end it all.”
- “If (such and such) doesn’t happen, I’ll kill myself.”



Indirect Verbal Clues

- “I’m tired of life, I just can’t go on.”
- “My family would be better off without me.”
- “Who cares if I’m dead anyway.”
- “I just want out.”
- “I won’t be around much longer.”
- “Pretty soon you won’t have to worry about me.”



Detached Verbal Clues

- Past tense talk
- Non use of terms of endearment (names of loved ones)



Behavioral Clues

- Any previous suicide attempt
- Acquiring a gun or stockpiling pills
- Co-occurring depression, moodiness, hopelessness
- Putting personal affairs in order
- Giving away prized possessions
- Sudden interest or disinterest in religion



Behavioral Clues

- Drug or alcohol abuse, or relapse after a period of recovery
- Unexplained anger, aggression, irritability or seeking revenge
- Sudden mood change
- Writing or Posting on social media about death, dying or suicide
- Acting recklessly or engaging in risky activities
- Isolating or withdrawing from family, friends or society



Situational Clues

- Being fired or being expelled from school
- A recent unwanted move
- Loss of any major relationship
- Death of a spouse, child, or best friend, especially if by suicide
- Diagnosis of a serious or terminal illness
- Sudden unexpected loss of freedom/fear of punishment
- Anticipated loss of financial security
- Loss of a cherished therapist, counselor or teacher
- Fear of becoming a burden to others



How to Respond

- Encourage early recognition
- Listen Non-judgmentally
- Offer support and reassurance
- Dialogue openly, ask direct questions
- Encourage early help-seeking behavior
- Take a training (Mental Health First Aid/Question.Persuade.Refer)
- **In crisis get immediate help**
- Engage in and encourage in others self-help behavior



Resources

- Farm Crisis Center <https://farmcrisis.nfu.org/>
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline 1.800.273.8255 (24/7 response)
- National Crisis Text line 741741 (24/7 response)
- Pennsylvania 211 Line (dial 211 to receive free 24/7 non-emergency information on various helps/services)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
www.namikeystonepa.org ph: 412.366.3788
- www.PreventSuicidePA.org

