

*Healthy Farmers =
Healthy Farms*

Canadian Agricultural Safety
Association

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Farm & Rural Stress

Farm and rural stress is a *community issue*. It touches everyone whose life and livelihood is linked to the land.



Stress and Safety

- Farming is one of the 10 most stressful occupations
- one of the three most dangerous (WHO)
- the combination of stress and daily work around powerful machinery in varying and unpredictable situations can lead to accidents.

Stress and Safety

American Study on Workplace Safety

- Unsafe behaviors account for 80% of workplace accidents and injuries
- Unsafe behaviors cause more accidents than unsafe equipment or other environmental factors
- Insurance claims for stress related accidents cost nearly twice as much as non-stress related accidents

CASA Study on Canadian Farmers & Stress: Highlights

- National study on farm stress (CASA, 2005). 1100 farmers across Canada surveyed;
- 2/3 of Canadian farmers were feeling stressed. 1 in 5 described themselves as “very stressed”;
- 3 main identified causes of stress: poor harvests/production, government policies, and farm finances;
- Only 2 in 10 farmers had spoken with a health care professional about stress and mental health concerns;
- Pride and farmers’ independence were most cited reasons for not seeking help in dealing with stress and mental health.

Obstacles to help-seeking behavior among producers:

- Concerns about their reputations in the community;
- Lack of understanding about what services exist and how they work;
- Being socialized to not seek help;
- Lack of money;
- Feeling that one must solve one's own problems;
- Fear of being perceived as lazy;
- Fear of being perceived as mentally ill;
- Distrust of helping professionals, and
- Pride.²



Manitoba Farm and Rural Stress Line

Farm Call Issues ...

- Financial
- Legal
- Communication
- Coping With Stress
- Relationship
- Off-farm job/farming
- Farm accidents
- Farm transfer/succession
- Loneliness
- Change
- Market prices
- Input costs
- Interest rates
- Weather, pests
- BSE, PMU, Avian Flu, etc.
- Government policies
- Attitudes/values

3 R's Approach to Stress Management and Farm Safety

1. Recognize

-signs of stress and farm safety

2. Reduce

-stress levels

3. Resources

-that help you cope with stress

Recognize



Stress is a “*normal reaction to situations that are perceived to be challenges or threats*”

It is our *reaction* to events, not the events themselves, that cause stress.

Signs of Stress

Physical	Emotional	Mental	Social
Headaches Teeth grinding Fatigue Insomnia Back aches Stomach problems Colds Neck aches Shoulder pains Increased use of drugs and alcohol	Anxiety Frustration Nervousness Depression Worrying Tension Mood swings Easily discouraged Irritability Anger Low self esteem	Forgetfulness Poor concentration Low productivity Negative attitude Confusion Lethargy Boredom Negative and/or morbid thoughts Lacking perspective	Isolation Loneliness Lashing out Clamming up Lowered sex drive Nagging Fewer contacts with friends Using people

Behavioral

Reckless operation of equipment
Out of control behaviors
Disregard for safety
Verbally/physically abusive
Unrealistic expectations for self and others
Poor eating habits

Reduce Stress by:

- *Eating* nutritious foods daily.
- *Talking* with family and friends.
- Taking time to *relax* every day.
- Doing aerobic *exercise* three times a week.

Balancing Act

- I try to take one day at a time ... but lately several days have attacked me at once...



Resources that help

- You
 - “know thyself”
- Family
 - Healthy relationships help
- Community
 - You are not alone
- Helpers/Supports
 - Who can I talk to?

What “YOU” can do?

- Think about the things that stress you out (write them down if you have to). Which of these are within your control? Which are not?
- Learn to accept the things you cannot change (Serenity Prayer).
- Break tasks down into manageable pieces and set priorities. Learn how to say no sometimes!
- Balance work and play, especially on the farm where home and work are so connected;

What “YOU” can do?

- Develop a positive attitude (“He who has a why to live can bear almost any how” – concentration camp survivor)
- Laugh! Children laugh an average of 400 times/day. As adults this decreases to approx. 15 laughs per day.
- Listen to your body: eat well, get enough sleep and exercise.

Resources

- Family/Community
 - Relationships provide us with identity, purpose and direction. In essence, relationships and therefore community is a life giving, life defining, life nurturing process.

Identify Your Supports

Friends, Family, Neighbors,
Co-workers, Doctor, Pharmacist,
Clergy, Mental Health Worker,
Counsellor, Helplines, Other...

On-line Resources

- www.ruralstress.ca
- www.reasontolive.ca
- www.de-stress.ca
- www.depression.mb.ca



The Importance of Stress Management

- You're worth it!
- Your family, friends, and community will benefit.
- Your business will benefit.
- Your life will benefit!

Thank you

Gerry Friesen

Signature Mediation

www.signaturemediation.ca

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www.ruralstress.ca