Managing Stress on the FARM

Dr. Suzanna Windon

Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology, and Education



Learning Objectives of the Session:

The interactive workshop will provide an opportunity for participants to embrace collaborative work and utilize best practices for the purpose of:

- Understanding stress, factors affecting stress on the farm, and consequences of farm stress
- Building stress resilience

During this workshop participants will:

- 1. Learn about stress and factors affecting farm stress
- 2. Learn about stress symptoms and consequences of farm stress
- 3. Measuring self-stress level and dealing with stress
- 4. Learn about the ABC Model of Stress
- 5. Fostering self-confidence to manage stress through activities
- 6. Learn about mindfulness
- 7. Receive tips for how to practice mindfulness
- 8. Practical tips for how to create positive state of mind
- 9. Learn about stress-relieving foods
- 10. PRACTICE



Sooo MANY HATS

- A grower/farmer/rancher
- An agronomist
- A soil specialist
- A plant pathologist
- A nutritionist
- A veterinarian
- An accountant
- An entertainer
- A customer service specialist
- A mechanic
- An electrician
- A maid
- A father
- A mother
- A grandfather
- A son
- A spouse
- A friend

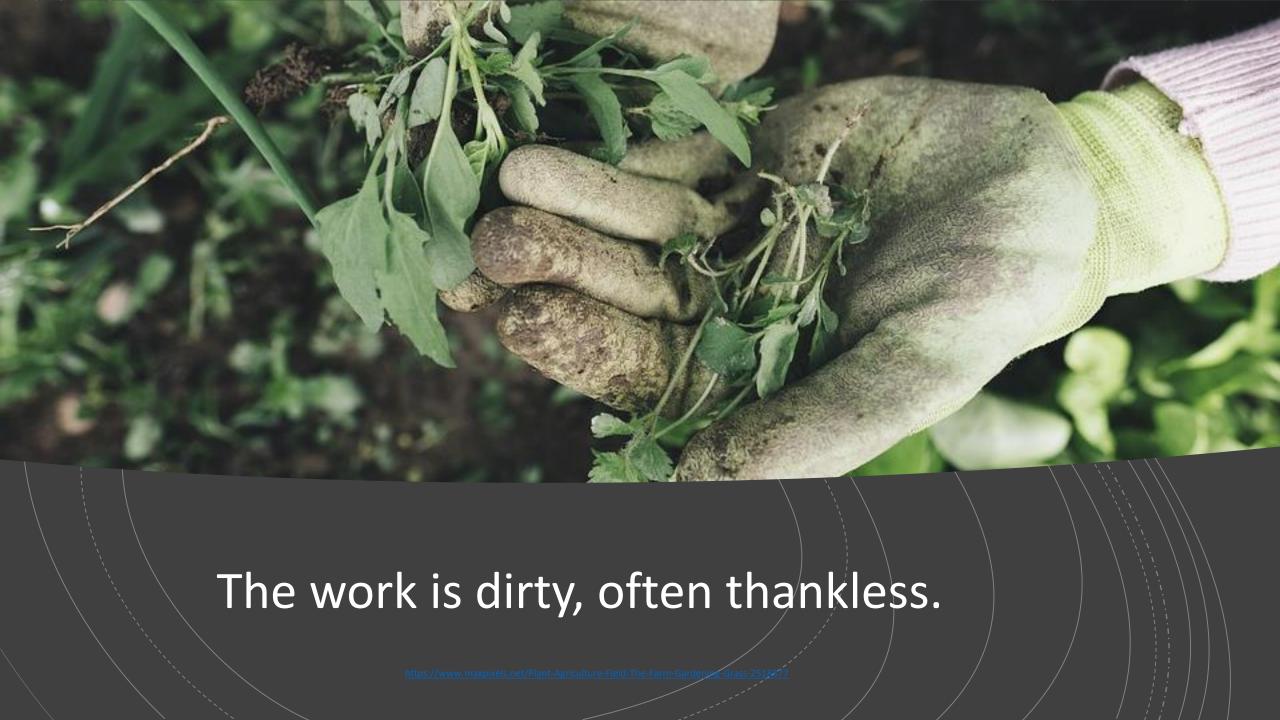


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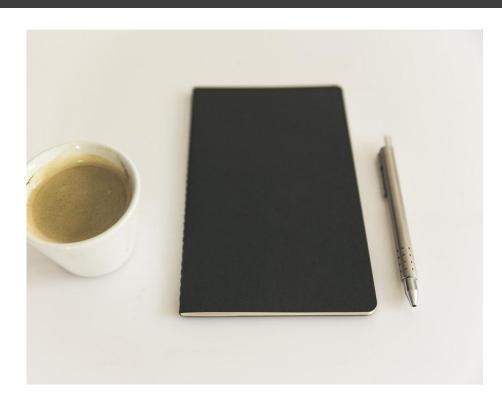


Nights are late





And some days, nothing seems to go right



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- Couldn't find my key
- Call from dealership: equipment is not ready to pick up, major issue
- Got a mail credit-card bill
- Problem with partnership, cannot make by deadline
- Price drop
- Unhappy customer
- Delivery issues

Safety risks in agritourism can affect your stress level

We know that - The safety of your farm visitors is non-negotiable!

Your farm guests/visitors:

- Not follow your instruction
- Be involved in a legitimate accident
- Steal/vandalize your property
- Not understand farm hazards

What is Stress?

National Center for Farmer Health, 2016

Changes that cause worry, frustration or upheaval and seem beyond our control can cause stress

Merriam-Webster

Stress is a condition where an environmental demand exceeds the natural regulatory capacity of an organism

Keating, Doherty, & Munro, 1988

Stress is a set of physical or mental reactions to anything that places demands upon a person which exceed his or her ability to cope Stress is a body's reaction to harmful situations



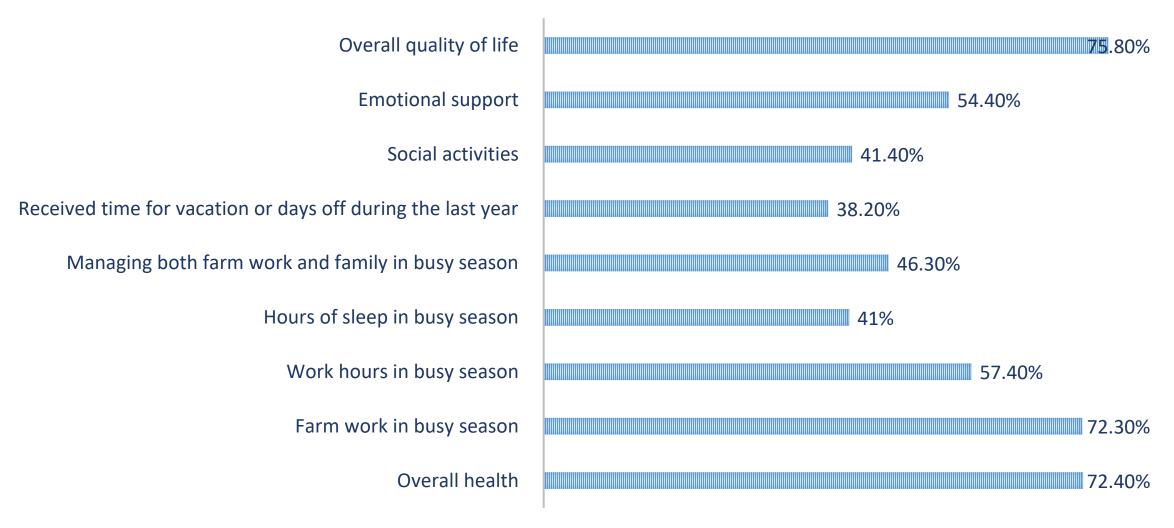
Potential Stress Factors

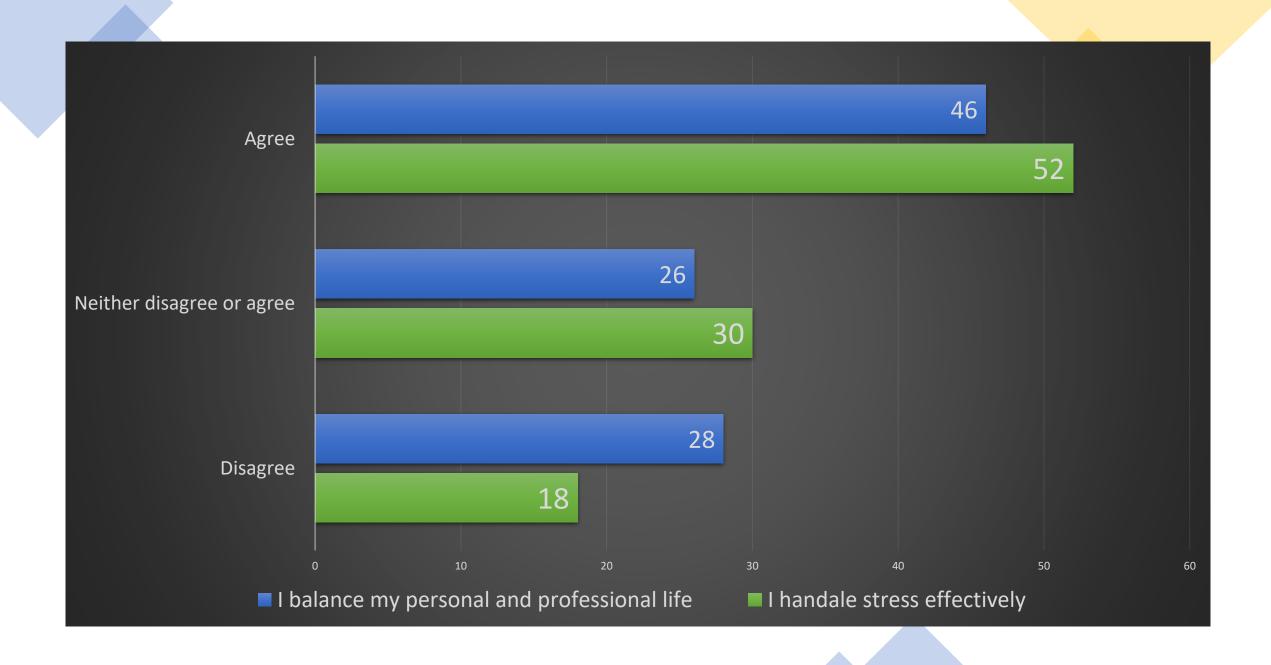
- COVID-19 and its consequences
- Traffic/ parking
- Building/bathrooms
- Weather
- Fire prevention
- Farm equipment & machinery
- Security measures
- Government regulation
- Eligibility for government programs and complicated paperwork
- Long working hours
- Input costs

- Financial pressure
- Irrigation ponds
- Pesticides/chemicals
- Animals
- Hay rides
- Food services
- Disability accommodations
- Managing both family and farm business in busy season
- Disagreements with other family members in the farm operation

QUALITY OF LIFE OF PENNSYLVANIA FARMERS (N=59)

(DATA COLLECTED, JUNE - OCTOBER 2019)





In the chat box please indicate:

What does it mean for you to be stressed when working on the farm and dealing with customers?

Effects of Stress

- ✓ Change the way we think
- ✓ Tunnel vision can prevent us from exploring alternatives/options
- ✓ Focusing on threat
- ✓ Become more suspicious
- ✓ Have difficulties to handling anger
- ✓ Misinterpret social interactions

Effects of Stress

Stress can occur suddenly with no warning

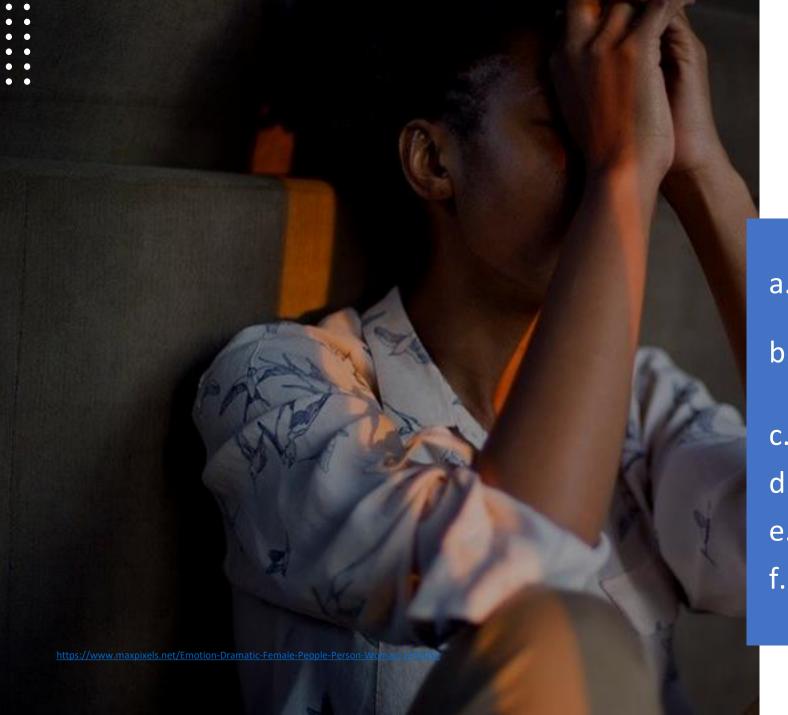
Frost negatively affected your garden Negative online review of operation

Build rapidly

Not enough time for child rearing
Pressure of having too much to do in too little time

Snowball effect of stress

High debt, escalation of worries, health issues Chronic stress is a response to a stressor that continues for more than a couple hours or days



Emotional Stress Symptoms:

- a. Feeling overwhelmed (losing control)
- b. Having difficulties to relax and quiet your mind
- c. Short temper
- d. Neglecting health condition
- e. Low self-esteem
- f. Frustration/moody

Physical Stress Symptoms:

- Insomnia & low energy
- Dry mouth
- Difficulty to swallowing
- Breathing quickens
- Muscles tighten
- Sweaty hands and feet
- Cold & infection
- Clenched jaws
- Grinding teeth

Cognitive Stress Symptoms:

- Inability to focus
- Racing thoughts
- Disorganized
- Forgetting things
- Constant worrying
- Poor judgment
- Being pessimistic



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- Procrastination
- Nail biting / fidgeting
- Not eating vs eating too much

- Lack of concentration
- Changes in sleeping habits
- Drug or alcohol use

Consequences of Stress:

Farm work

- Poor farm management
- Spontaneous decision making
- Farm accident
- Farm injury
- Farm safety issue

You feel helpless to change your circumstances

Unbalanced work and family life

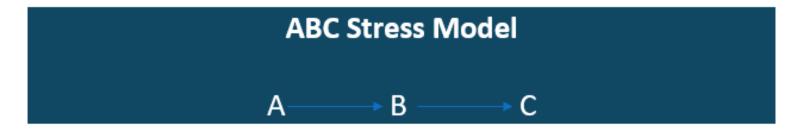
Health

- Mental health issues
- Cardiovascular disease
- Reproductive issues
- Skin and hair problems
- Gastrointestinal problems

How Stressed Do You Feel? (Activity # 3) Measure your stress level

Building Stress Resilience

ABC Model (Dr. Martin Seligman)



Adversity/ Beliefs/ Consequences

- A is the activating event or triggering situation. It is stressor or stress trigger.
- B your beliefs, thoughts, or perceptions about A
- C are the consequences, or stress, that results from holding these thoughts and beliefs.

Potential stressful situation — Your thinking — Your stress (or lack of stress)

"PEOPLE ARE ABOUT AS HAPPY THEY MAKE UP THEIR MINDS TO BE"

Potential stressful situation

Your thinking

Your stress (or lack of stress)

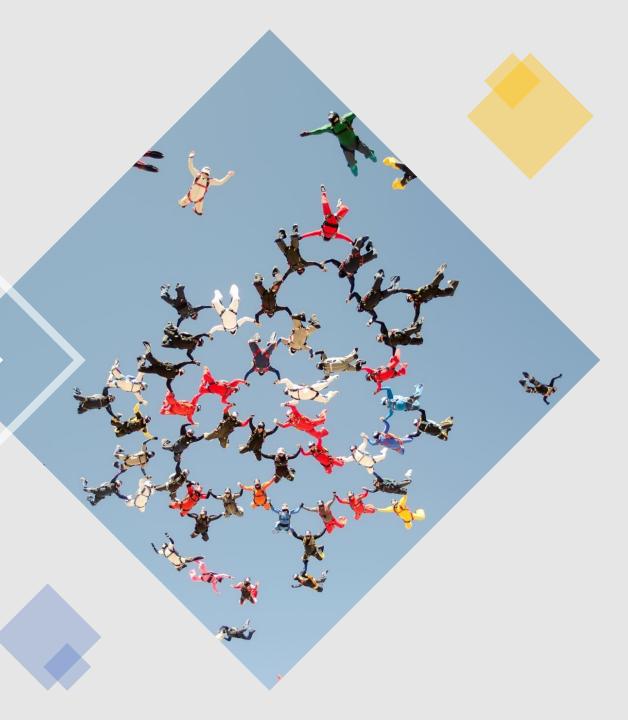
Monitor Your Stress

Time	My Stressor Triggers (Importance level 1-10)	My Stress Level (Stress level 1-10)
6:00 am	Couldn't find my key (2)	Annoyed, upset (4)
9:30 am	Call from dealership: equipment is not ready to pick up, major issue (5)	Annoyed (8)
10:20 am	Mail came, big credit-card bill (6)	Upset, worried (8)
2:10 pm	Problem with partnership/deadline (7)	Worried, anxious (9)
4:00 pm	Delivery driver got sick (5)	Worried (8)

Confidence is Important!

If you feel confident that you can manage your stress, you will feel less stressed (Curtis,

Groarke, and Sullivan 2014)



Stay Focus

- Focus on one thing at a time
- Concentrate
- No skipping steps
- Take your time
- Later, analyze how to do it better

Worry-free zone

- Set aside a designated "worry time." Create a daily "worry" period – 10-20 minutes/day
- Stay busy and focus on your task (self-talk is important)/ refocus if needed (take breaks, check on each other, visit your relative or neighbor ask how they doing)
- Talk about your worries/Slow down
- Plan ahead
- Train, train, train your workers
- Rest and sleep

Deciding What You Can & Can't Control (this practice will help you when coping with uncertainty and lack of control) Activity # 7, p.11

- 1. Think about the stressful situation you are facing.
- 2. Consider different aspects of the situation, such as:
 - "Things I Can Control."
 - "Things I Can't Control."
 - "Not Sure"



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Creating Positive States of Mind – Resilience Plan

Positive Thoughts vs.
Negative Thoughts



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Assessing The Odds Exercise: Replace "It is likely? with Is it possible?"

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Not dying in a flood - 99.9966667%
Not dying in an earthquake – 99.9992418%
Not dying in a lightning strike – 99.9988085%
Not dying in a tornado – 99.9983333%
Not dying in a tsunami - 99.9998%
Not dying in an air-travel accident - 99.995%
Not dying due to drowning - 99.9888168%
Not dying in a fire (includes smoke) - 99.9103943%
Not dying by firearm assault - 99.6884735%
Not dying in a motor-vehicle accident - 98.9795918%
Not dying by stroke - 96.5517241%
Not dying of cancer - 85.7142857%
Not dying of heart disease - 83.3333333%
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Practice Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a way of paying attention purposefully and with nonjudgmental acceptance to your present — moment experience (Jon Kabat-Zin, 1994)

 Adopt the stance of mindfulness toward your own experience in the moment, whatever that may be

- 2. Sit peacefully, examine your thoughts, feelings, or body sensations
- 3. Replace fear with a curious, gentle, and welcoming attitude free of judgment, self-blame, and aversion

Practice STOP to help yourself (activity # 9)

Stop. Stop whatever you are doing and bring your mind back to the present moment.

Take a breath. Take a few breaths to slow down your "fight, flight, or freeze" response.

Observe. Notice what you are feeling, thinking, and doing.

Proceed. When you are feeling sufficiently present and aware, go about your business in a deliberate way.

Continue what you were doing with a more mindful demeanor.

Breathing creates space for anger and frustration and allows us to see solutions (activity # 10)

Breathing Exercise:

Before getting out of your truck at the farm/orchard Take 3 more long, deep breaths. Find something to be thankful for.

Before getting out of bed, lie still for a moment.

Take 3 long, deep breaths.

Pause for a moment between the inhale and exhale.

Try not to fall back to sleep.

Repeat this process as needed throughout the day (like before the catch crew shows up).

You can't stop the stressors from popping up, but you can stop them from stressing you out



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Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness



Taking the time to step back and focus, mindfully hits a reset button on your current situation, and practiced over time has been proven to lead to the following benefits:

- Decreased stress
- Better manage triggers
- Reduced error rate
- Increased focus
- Increased happiness

Must Have Positive Activities (participant's workbook)



CREATE INTEREST



CREATE CONTENTMENT



CREATE LOVE



CREATE RELAXATION



CREATE ENGAGEMENT



CREATE AMUSEMENT



CREATE JOY

Reflect on Stress and Stress Reduction

- 1. How can you determine your stress level?
- 2. What factors are affecting your high stress level and stress symptoms?
- 3. Think about how to foster self-confidence to manage stress.
- 4. How can you utilize mindfulness to reduce your stress level?
- 5. How can you create a positive state of mind?
- 6. How can a breathing exercise help you reduce your stress level?



Resources:

- 1. Adopted from Greenberg, M. (2016). The stress-proof brain: Master your emotional response to stress using mindfulness and neuroplasticity. New Harbinger Publications.
- 2. Adopted from Elkin, A. (2013). *Stress management for dummies*. John Wiley & Sons.
- 3. Adopted from Happy farming. Manage Farm Stress Using Mindfulness https://www.val-co.com/manage-farm-stress-using-mindfulness
- 4. Managing Stress on the Farm. National Centre for Farmer Health https://www.farmerhealth.org.au/



Thank you!

