

FARM STRESS TEAM

RAISING MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS IN AGRICULTURE

Extension Educators working together to provide relevant educational programming and promoting mental health awareness among farmers, farm families and rural communities.

WHAT IS FARM STRESS?

- **Even in good times, agriculture is a stressful occupation.** Farmers own and operate private small businesses. They often have little control over the prices they receive for their products and input costs can fluctuate drastically.
- For many, their **success depends on the weather** which is extremely unpredictable.
- Since 2013 **net farm income has declined** by about 50% nationally. In Indiana, the decline is even more severe.
- If you are a farmer and are feeling stressed, **you are not alone.** The programs and information available through the Purdue Extension Farm Stress Team are designed to help you cope with stress.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

- Programs designed to educate farmers on the effects of stress they may be experiencing and encourage them to **engage in conversations involving mental health.**
- Curriculum written by Michigan State University delivered by Purdue Extension Farm Stress Team members reach local audiences
- Weathering the Storm in Agriculture is a one-hour program focused on **symptoms of stress** with farmers and their families as the intended audience.
- Communicating with Farmers Under Stress is a four-hour program for agribusiness employees to help them **recognize stressors in their customers.**

PODCAST

- The Purdue Extension Farm Stress Team's official podcast, "**TOOLS FOR TODAY'S FARMERS**" features in-depth conversations with agriculturalists from all corners of the industry.
- Gives farmers an opportunity to **listen and learn while multitasking** in the field or on the road with a laid-back, conversational feel.
- Since its debut in 2020, the Tools For Today's Farmer Podcast now has **over 30 episodes** with over 2,400 total plays.
- Everyone from leaders in the ag industry like Zippy Duvall and Bruce Kettler, to fan favorites like Matt Painter and Ginger Zee, to industry experts like Gene Marks and Jayson Lusk, to local farmers and ag workers provide many perspectives on the industry, mental health and how it all comes together.



FARM STRESS TEAM

extension.purdue.edu/farmstress

PROVIDING HELPFUL RESOURCES WHEN YOU NEED THEM MOST



OPENING A CONVERSATION

- Starting a conversation about mental health can be very difficult, but simply creating the opportunity for **open communication** could make all the difference for someone struggling with stress, depression, exhaustion or others.
- Make an effort to be **empathetic**, not just **sympathetic**. When talking with someone struggling with their mental health, avoid comparing experiences, pointing out a silver lining in every situation or offering pity. Instead, listen with the intent of understanding, ask how you can best help them, and encourage them to reach out to you or others for further support.
- Ask the hard questions.** Studies have shown that simply asking someone if they are having suicidal thoughts does not cause individuals to contemplate suicide. In reality, if you suspect someone is thinking about suicide, **asking them about it directly** is more likely to provide them relief that someone sees their struggle and cares enough to intervene (NIMH 2021).

National Institute of Mental Health (2021). *Frequently Asked Questions About Suicide*. Retrieved July 21, 2022, from <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/suicide-faq>

You can't take care of your farm, your livestock or your family if you don't first take care of yourself.



FARM STRESS TEAM

IMPACT AND OUTREACH

- The Purdue Extension Farm Stress Team has provided education to **2,441 farmers, farm families, and agribusiness leaders** from 2019 until present. The participants reported the following:

BODY	HELP	TALK	WARN
100%	99%	99%	98%
100% understand the impact that stress has on our bodies.	99% know where to direct people for help.	99% have confidence in communicating with someone under stress.	98% understand the warning signs of suicide.

- Additional outreach includes website development, podcasts, Facebook presence, and trade show presence.
- Two online training modules for mental health professionals and 988 crisis call centers on the unique needs of farmers and the agricultural community.
- A downloadable Toolkit for operators is also being developed to increase mental health awareness among employees.

RESOURCES

- Check the Purdue Extension Farm Stress Team website for more resources & information: **Extension.purdue.edu/farmstress**
- 988 Hotline** - A new resource that allows you direct access to mental health assistance anywhere, anytime by calling 988.
- Be Well Indiana** - General mental health resources and substance abuse resources specifically geared towards Indiana residents. <https://www.in.gov/bewellindiana/>
- Purdue Extension Substance Abuse** - Educational video series and resources on the topic of substance abuse that covers a variety of situations, experiences and solutions. www.extension.purdue.edu/opioids



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