

Farmer Mental Health Trends, Risk Factors, and Stress Reduction Techniques "Mindful Living"

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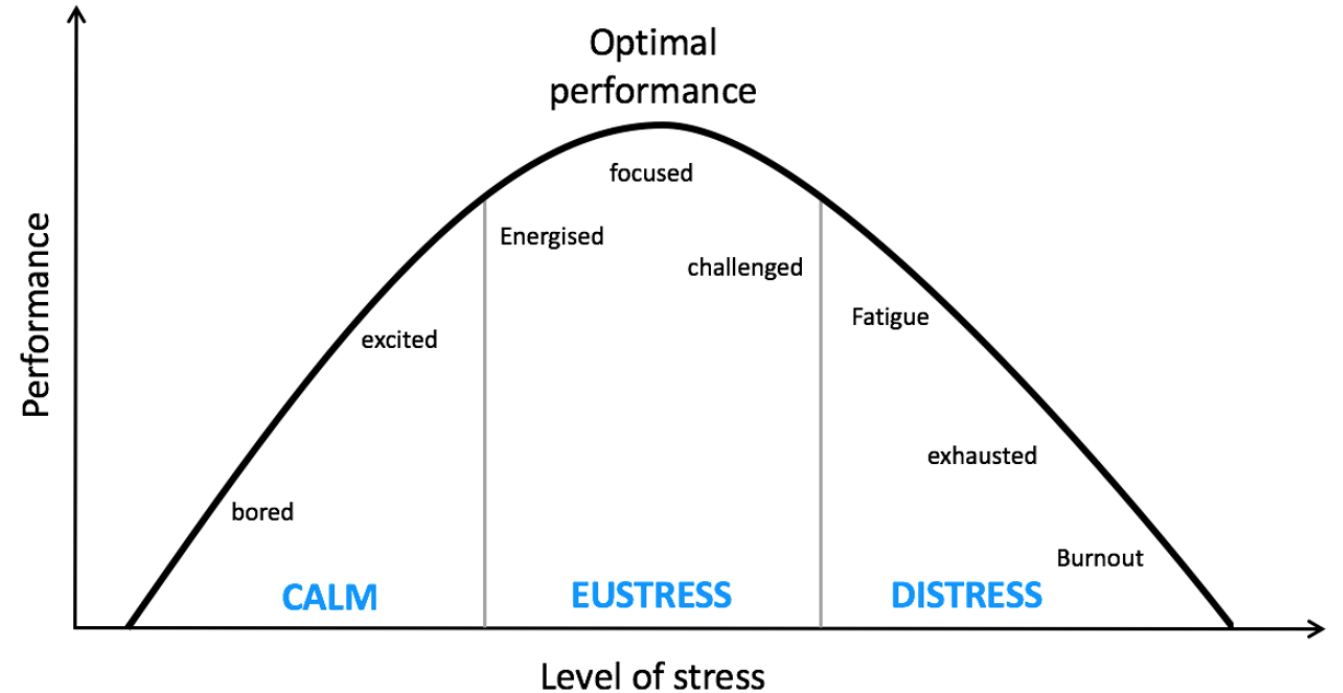
Objectives

- Describe common stressors in agriculture
- Quantify the burden of mental health conditions among agricultural producers
- Stress symptoms and consequences of farm stress
- ABC Model of Stress
- Tips how to build stress resilience
- Stress reduction techniques

:

Stress

- Feeling of emotional or physical tension
- Emerges from event or situation that leads to feeling frustrated, angry, nervous
- Body's reaction to a challenge or demand



Agriculture in the US - Stressors

- Unique occupational stressors when compared to other industries
 - Time pressures
 - Weather
 - Political
 - Financial
- COVID-19

Supply stores are not open; we cannot get what we need.

Packer Closings. No market for beef.

Every day is a workday, as no social activity is permitted.

Protecting workers and producers while getting critical jobs completed in ag production

My ability to interact directly and closely with my farm producers

Chronic Stress and Health

- Physical health conditions
 - Hypertension
 - Heart attack and stroke
 - Musculoskeletal disorders
- Mental health conditions
 - Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Substance use

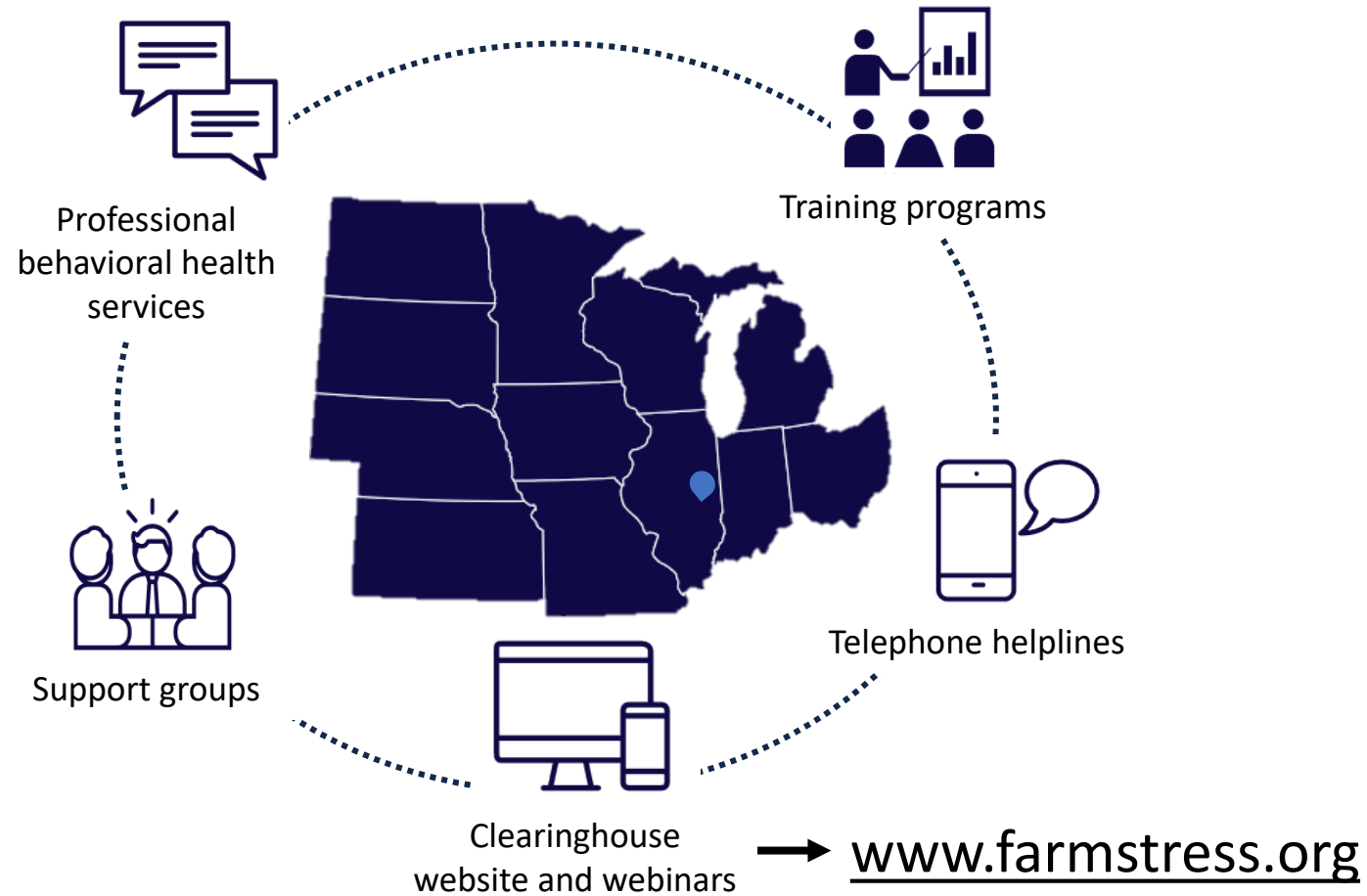
Mental Health of Agricultural Workforce

- Owner/operator
 - Estimated 12.9-60.0% meet criteria for at least moderate depression (Onwuameze et al., 2013; Rudolphi et al., 2020).
- Farmworkers
 - Nearly 50% meet criteria for depression (Ramos et al., 2018; Arcury et al., 2018)
- Farm families
 - Parental economic hardship associated with internalizing and externalizing behaviors among youth (Conger & Conger, 2000; Conger et al., 2002)

Resources



**North Central
Farm and Ranch
Stress Assistance Center**



In the chat box please
indicate:

*What does it mean
for you to be stressed
on the farm?*

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



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

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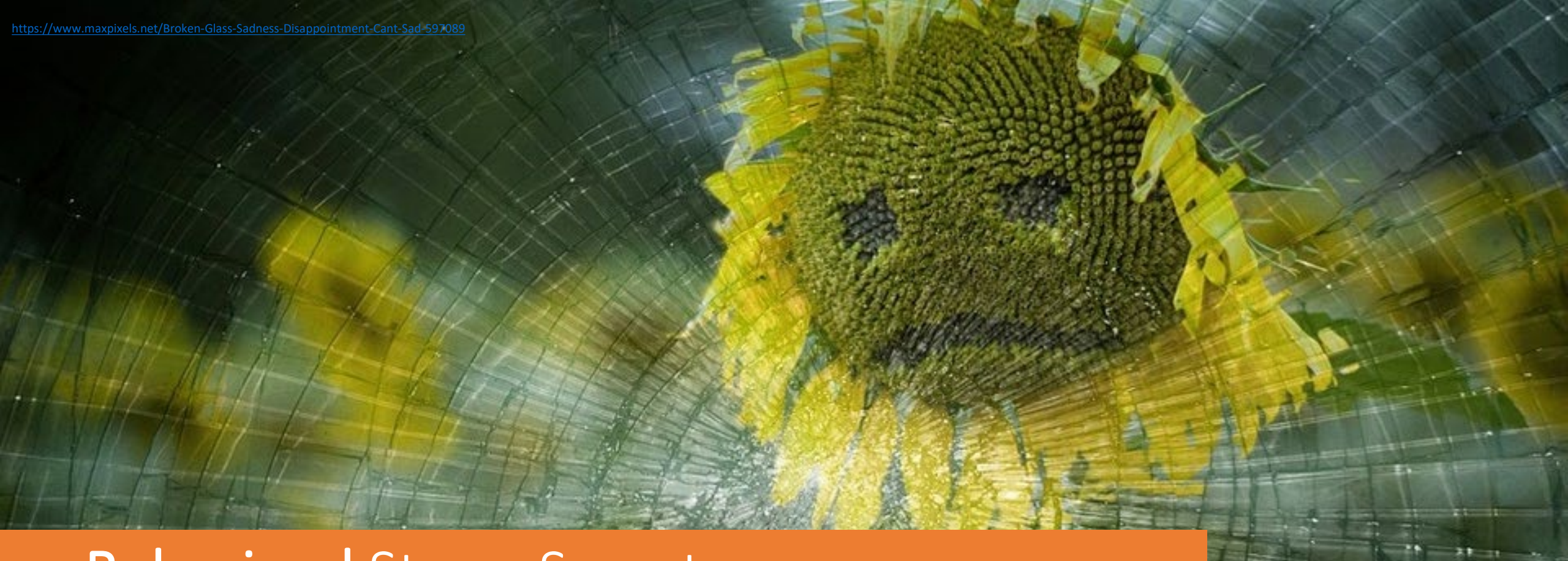


Cognitive Stress Symptoms:

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



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Behavioral Stress Symptoms:

- Procrastination
- Nail biting / fidgeting
- Not eating vs eating too much
- Lack of concentration
- Changes in sleeping habits
- Drug or alcohol use

Consequences of Stress:

*You feel helpless to change your
circumstances*

Unbalanced farm work and family life

Health Issue

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



How Stressed Do You Feel?
Measure your stress level activity



How do you deal with stress?

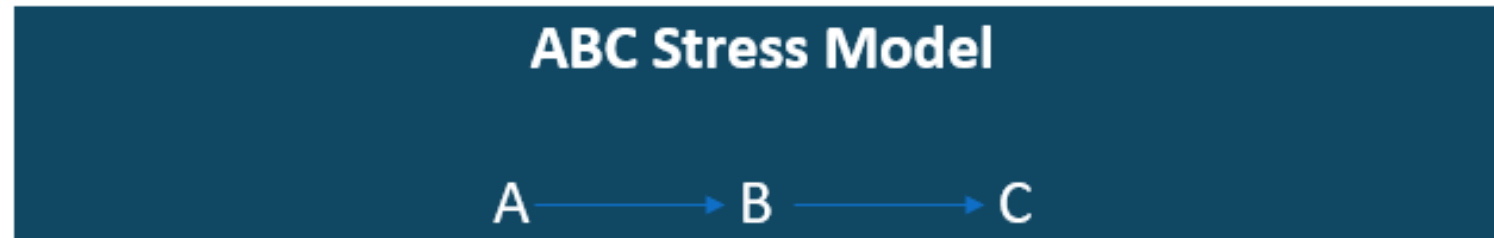
<i>Awareness about stress</i>		
Can you name three recent situations that have caused stress in your life?	Yes	No
Can you list three signs (physical, emotional or behavioral) that you suffer when you are under stress?	Yes	No
<i>Accepting stress</i>		
Can you maintain a positive or neutral attitude when dealing with the “little things” in life?	Yes	No
Can you change the way you view stressful situations to be more constructive in how you react?	Yes	No
<i>Coping with stressors helps direct your energy toward problem solving</i>		
Do you know and use relaxation techniques like deep breathing and meditation?	Yes	No
Do you ever use exercise to get rid of stressed feelings?	Yes	No
<i>Action</i>		
Do you make a list and prioritize tasks to keep yourself from feeling overwhelmed by all there is to do?	Yes	No
When conflict arises can you express your feelings and communicate them to others effectively?	Yes	No



Building Stress Resilience or Stress Reduction Techniques



ABC Model (Dr. Martin Seligman)

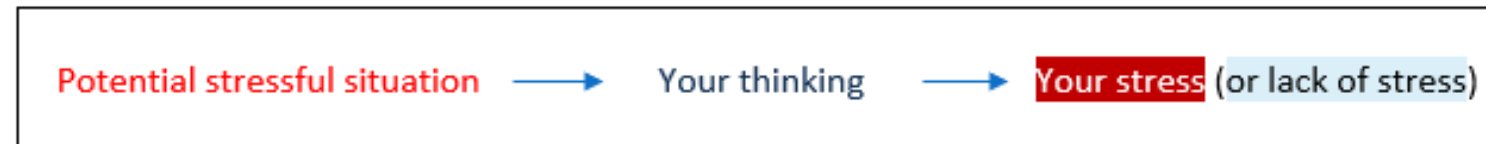


Adversity/ Beliefs/ Consequences

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.



And some days, nothing seems to go right



- Couldn't find my key
- Call from dealership: equipment/car 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

Monitor Your Stress

<i>Time</i>	<i>My Stressor (Situation) (Importance level 1-10)</i>	<i>My Stress Level (Stress level 1-10)</i>
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)



Deciding What You Can & Can't Control
*(this practice will help you when coping with
uncertainty and lack of control)*

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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Put Things You Can't Control Into a Box (Activity # 8)

NO:05

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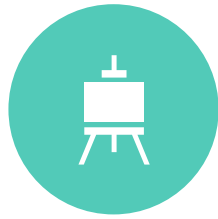
Creating Positive States of Mind – Resilience Plan



Must Have Positive Activities



CREATE
INTEREST



CREATE
CONTENTMENT



CREATE LOVE



CREATE
RELAXATION



CREATE
ENGAGEMENT



CREATE
AMUSEMENT



CREATE JOY

Positive Thoughts
vs.
Negative Thoughts



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

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%



Practice Mindfulness

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

1. 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

**Practice STOP
to help yourself**

- 1. Stop**
- 2. Take a breath**
- 3. Observe**
- 4. Proceed**

Breathing creates space for anger and frustration and allows us to see solutions

Breathing Exercise:

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

- 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



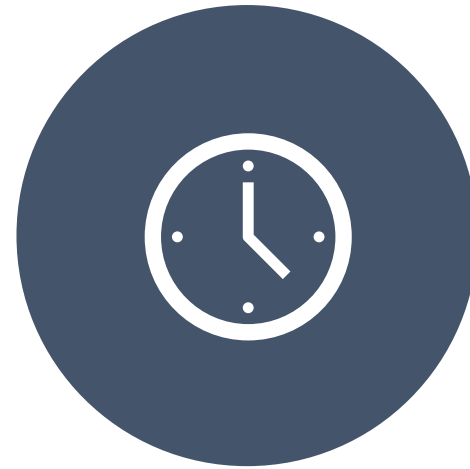
Taking the time to step back and focus, mindfully hits a reset button on your current situation, and practiced over time has been proven to lead to the following benefits:

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

Stay **Focus**



FOCUS ON ONE THING AT A
TIME



TAKE YOUR TIME

Reflect on Stress and Stress Reduction

Strategies

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

Extension Products Related to Leadership

- <https://extension.psu.edu/suzanna-windon-ph-d>
- [https://mailchi.mp/d60d0c785799/vol management leadership](https://mailchi.mp/d60d0c785799/vol_management_leadership)

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!

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