

Managing Stress on the FARM

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Learning Objectives of the Session:

- Understand stress, stress symptoms, factors affecting stress on the farm, and consequences of stress
- Strategies and tips how to build 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

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



<https://www.maxpixels.net/Hutkrempe-Cowboy-Hat-Western-Cowboy-Hat-Headwear-2801582>

<https://www.maxpixels.net/Headwear-Sun-Protection-Hat-Straw-Hat-Coneflower-2268995>

<https://www.maxpixels.net/Hatband-Isolated-Hat-Headwear-Clothing-Cowboy-Hat-2738831>



<https://www.maxpixels.net/Apple-Orchard-Red-Apple-Delicious-Red-Apple-Branch-2788651>

<https://www.maxpixels.net/Nutrition-Apple-Fruits-Vegetables-Fruit-Market-1761031>

And some days, nothing seems to go right



- 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

Example:

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

Often what we cannot control causes farmers to feel the most stress

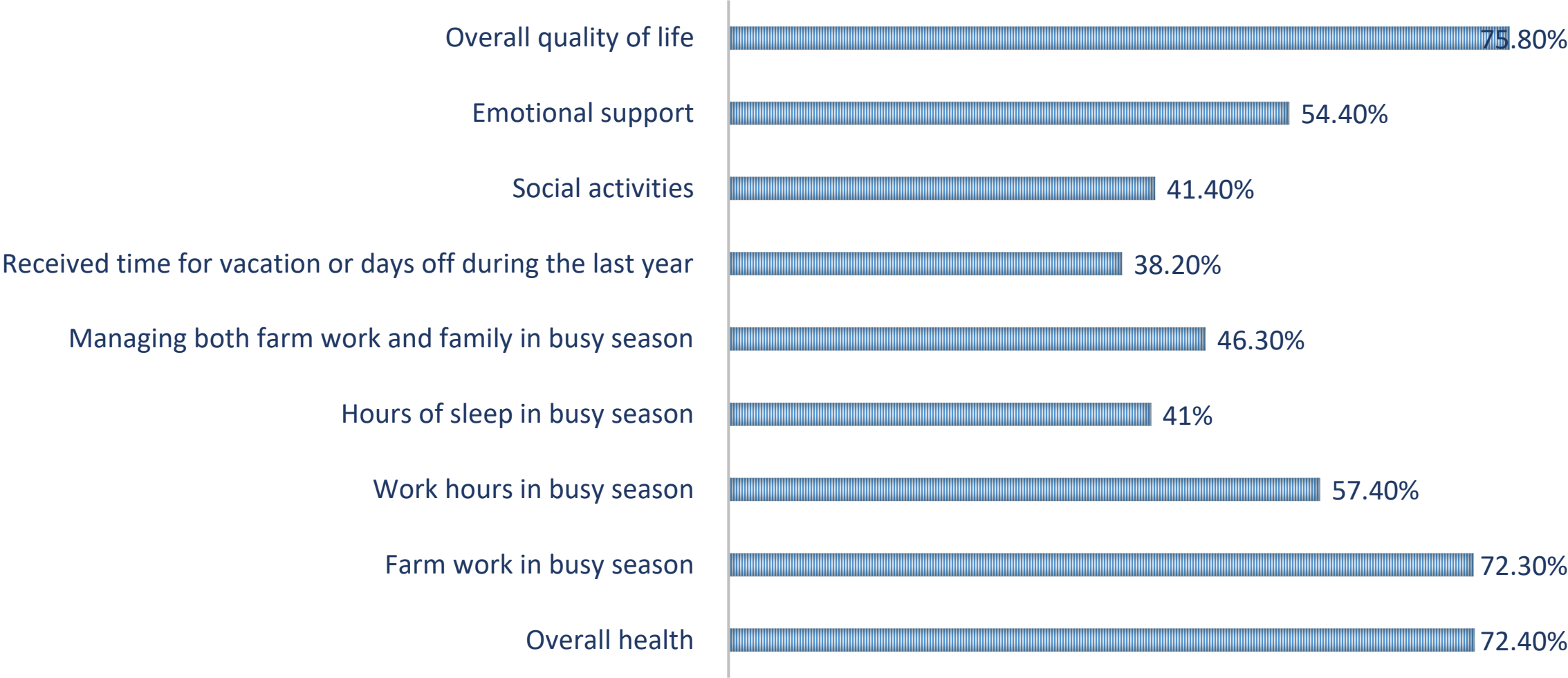


Potential Stress Factors

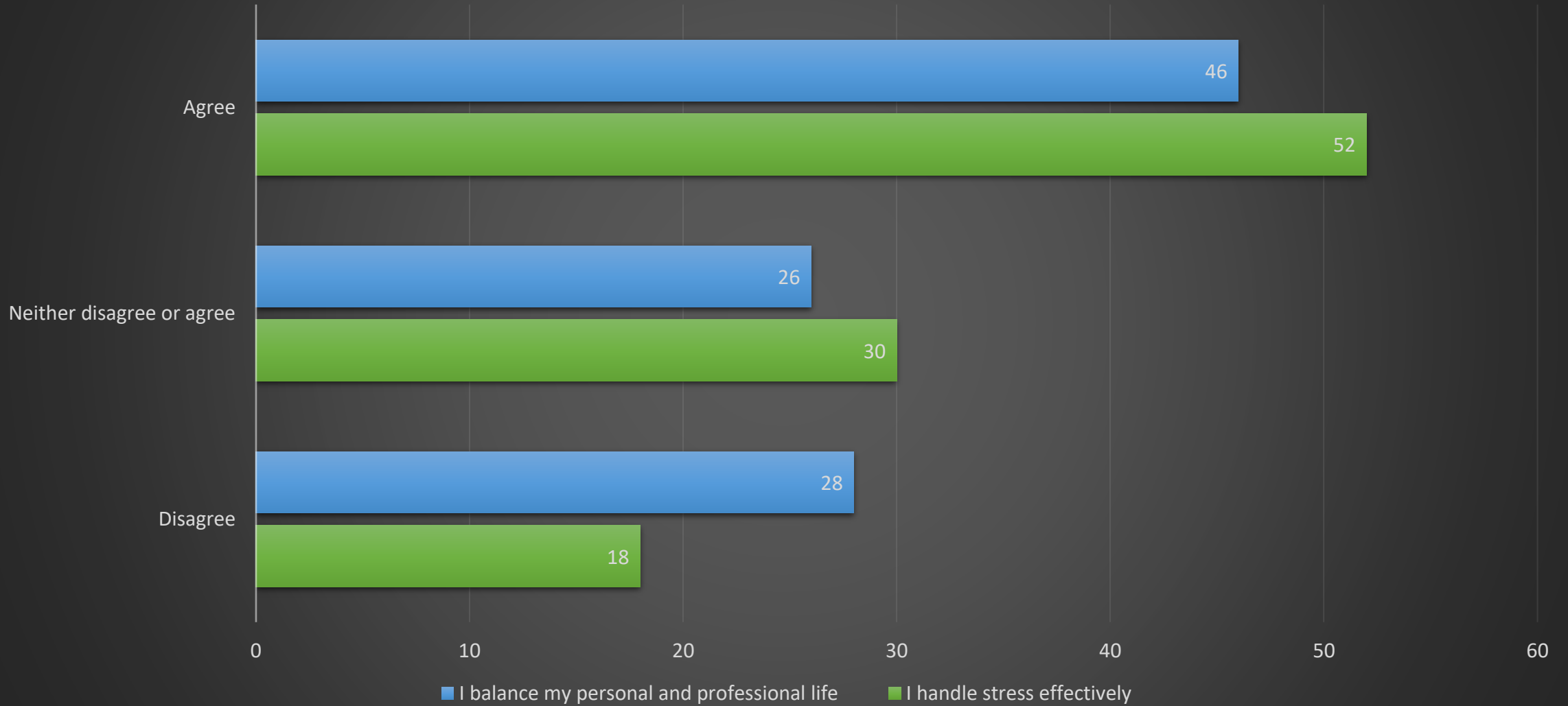
- COVID-19 and its consequences
- Weather
- Fire prevention
- Farm equipment & machinery
- Security measures
- Government regulation
- Eligibility for government programs and complicated paperwork
- Long working hours
- Input costs
- Traffic/ parking (agritourism operation)
- Hayrides
- Building/bathrooms
- Financial pressure
- Irrigation ponds
- Pesticides/chemicals
- Animals
- 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)



Farmers' Self-Leadership



What does it mean for you to be stressed
when working on the farm and /or
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

<https://www.maxpixels.net/Teamwork-Tying-Business-Old-Tied-Up-Togetherness-1792237>

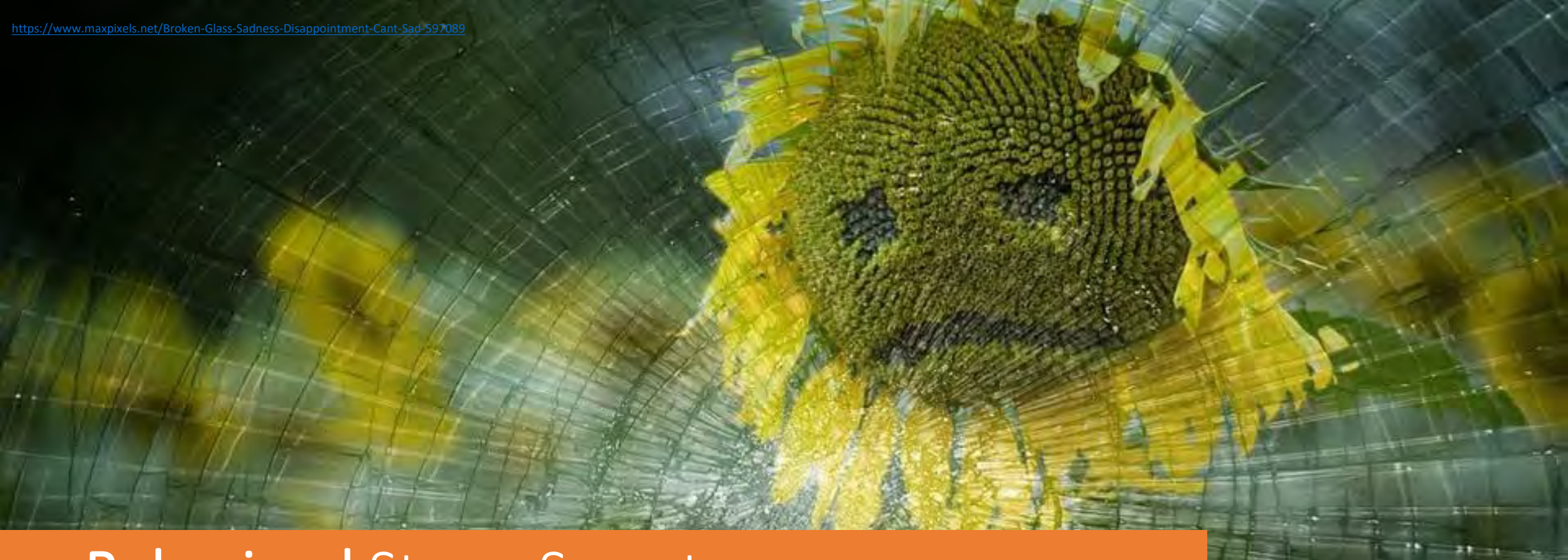


Cognitive Stress Symptoms:

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



<https://www.maxpixels.net/Abstract-Anatomy-Art-Brain-Branches-Computation-2146817>



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:

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?
Measure your stress level
(see participant's workbook)

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

ABC Model (Dr. Martin Seligman)

ABC Stress Model

A → B → C

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)

Monitor Your Stress

<i>Time</i>	<i>My Stressor (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)* 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”**



<https://www.maxpixels.net/Biological-Stinging-Nettle-Leaf-Leaves-181237>



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

<https://www.maxpixels.net/Chest-Fitting-Ornament-Casket-Textile-Box-Closure-2536477>

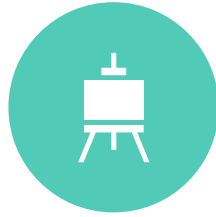


Creating Positive States of Mind – Resilience Plan

Must Have Positive Activities (participant's workbook)



CREATE
INTEREST



CREATE
CONTENTMENT



CREATE LOVE



CREATE
RELAXATION



CREATE
ENGAGEMENT



CREATE
AMUSEMENT



CREATE JOY

Positive Thoughts
vs.
Negative Thoughts



<https://www.maxpixels.net/Funny-Troop-Anti-stress-Balls-3660833>



<https://www.maxpixels.net/Anti-stress-Balls-Funny-Troop-2472633>

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
to help yourself
(activity # 9)

Practice STOP

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

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



<https://www.maxpixels.net/Happiness-Joy-Nature-Open-Air-Pure-Air-Breathing-1866081>

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

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



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)

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!

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