

Protecting Your Organization's Most Important Asset: YOU

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Ask In Earnest



My Background



Protecting Your Most Important Resource

- The unique stressors of farming and ranching
- Why talk about mental health?
 - The mental health continuum
- Suicide myths
- Brain health
- Strategies—Cultivating Life Toolkit:
 - Improve & protect your (and your loved ones') mental health
 - Support positive changes in the ag community re: mental health
- Resources



Agricultural Stressors

- Work/life balance
- Economics
- Language/culture of farming
- Exposure to pesticides/farm chemicals/grain dust
- Stigma
- Trauma history
- Lack of/reluctance to seek mental health services
- Alcohol use as a coping strategy
- Access to lethal means
- Lack of Vitamin D
- High altitude
- Mental illness
- Anxiety and stress regarding climate change
- Social isolation

The Importance of Mental Health

- Up to 90% of those who die by suicide had an undiagnosed and untreated mental health condition:
 - Depression
 - Alcoholism
- The GOOD news is they are treatable!!

WHERE ARE YOU ON THE MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM?

HEALTHY

- Normal mood fluctuations
- Calm & takes things in stride
- Good sense of humour
- Performing well
- In control mentally
- Normal sleep patterns
- Few sleep difficulties
- Physically well
- Good energy level
- Physically and socially active
- Not using substances to cope
- None or limited gambling

RESPONDING/ REACTING

- Irritable/impatient
- Nervous
- Sadness/overwhelmed
- Procrastination
- Forgetfulness
- Trouble sleeping
- Intrusive thoughts
- Nightmares
- Muscle tension/headaches
- Low energy
- Decreased activity/socializing
- Regular but controlled substance use/gambling

INJURED

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Pervasively sad/hopeless
- Negative attitude
- Poor performance/workaholic
- Poor concentration/decisions
- Restless disturbed sleep
- Recurrent images/nightmares
- Increased aches and pains
- Increased fatigue
- Avoidance
- Withdrawal
- Increased substance use/
gambling is hard to control

ILL

- Angry outbursts/aggression
- Excessive anxiety/panic attacks
- Thoughts of suicide
- Can't perform duties, control behaviour or concentrate
- Can't fall asleep or stay asleep
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Physical illness
- Constant fatigue
- Not going out/answering phone
- Substance or gambling addiction
- Other addictions

We ALL have Mental Health
Learn more about Mental Health on the BWW



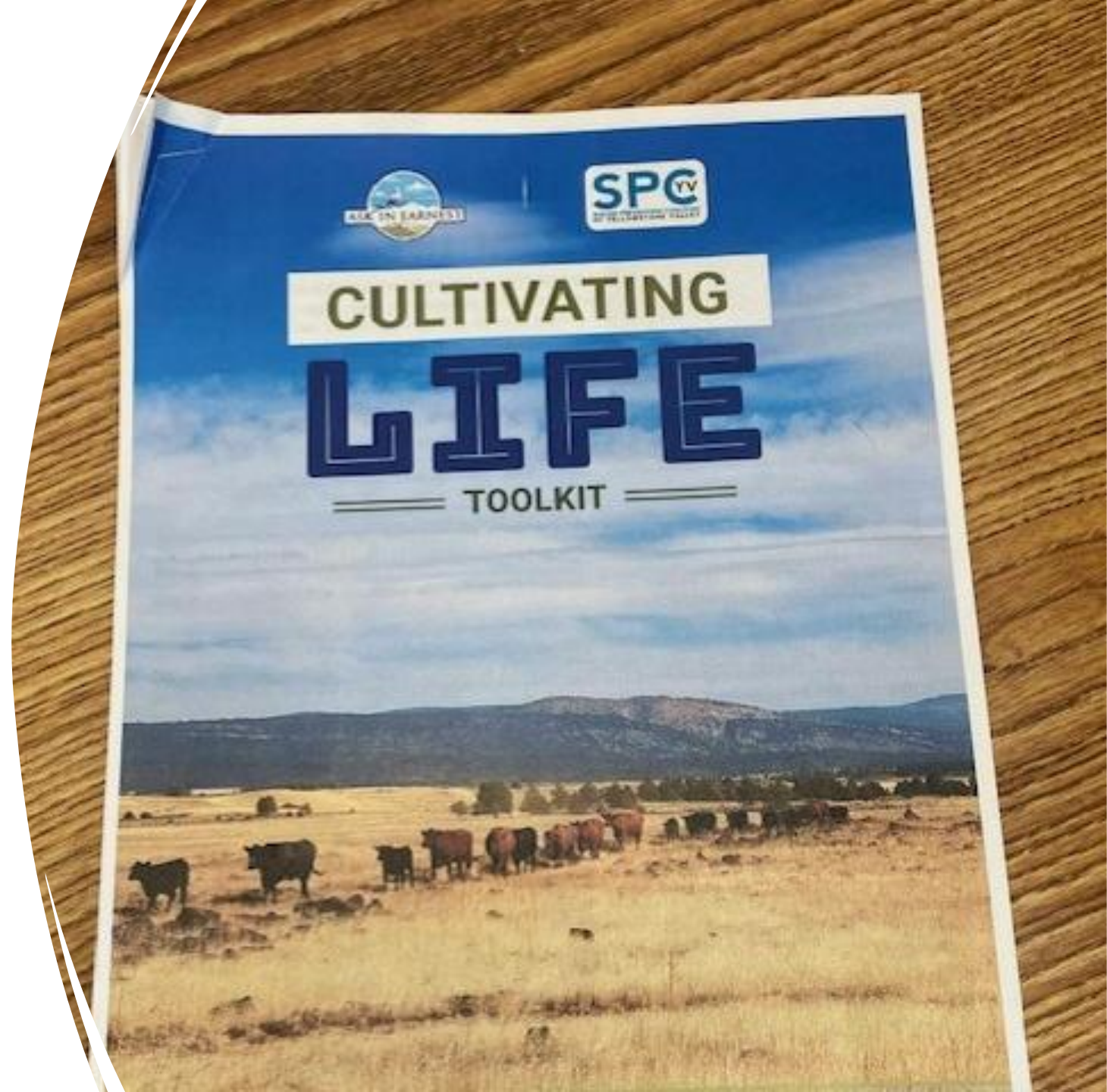
Suicide Myths

- Most suicides happen without warning
- People who die by suicide are selfish and take the easy way out
- Once someone is suicidal, they will always be suicidal
- Talking about it causes it
- Strong people don't kill themselves

Brain Health

- **We want happy brains!**
- **Brain chemicals and how to activate them:**
- **Endorphins**
 - Released with exercise—not just for runners!
- **Dopamine**
 - Released when we do something pleasurable, i.e., get a hug, eat chocolate, exercise, listen to music, intimacy, reaching a goal
- **Serotonin**
 - Exposure to sunlight or bright light
 - Exercise!!
 - Anti depressant medications
- **Oxytocin**
 - Known as the “cuddle” hormone; builds intimacy, trust, lowers anxiety
 - Touch—hug from a friend, massage, back rub, cuddle with partner or pet—make connections

**Let's Put the
Toolkit to
Use!**



Exercise

- **Aerobic** (i.e. walking, cycling, running, dancing)
- **20-30 minutes** most days of the week (accumulate 60 even better)
- Dr. Murphy's advice 😊
- Exercise **positively impacts brain chemistry**—remember the happy brain chemicals!
- The importance of **year-round fitness**, not just the busy season(s)
- **Balanced fitness**
 - Cardio, strength, stretch

Nutrition & Hydration

- Think of the time and effort you put into **nourishing your crops and livestock...why do you do this?**
- A body that is continually stressed is **more prone** to depression
- **Help protect the body=help protect the mind**
- **Nutrition:**
 - High quality vs. Low quality diet
 - More natural state vs. processed state
- **Hydration and mental health**
 - Incorporating more fluids into your diet



Sleep

- Can be a symptom of and a risk factor for depression
- Your sleep environment:
 - Routine
 - Noise
 - Light
 - Temperature
 - Humidity
 - Limit stimulants
 - Scent



Stress Management

- **Signs of stress:**

- **Changes:**

- Emotions
 - Attitudes and cognitive skills
 - Behavior
 - On the Farm/Ranch
 - Appearance

- **What works for you?**

- Not a one-size-fits-all **recipe**
 - Be mindful to not let anything become **excessive/harmful/numbing**
 - What's in your **toolkit**
 - What are the **lessons we've learned**, or haven't learned, from the past.....



Gratitude

- **Lasting effects** on the brain
- **Reduces** stress and anxiety
- **Improves** productivity
- Helps promote **better sleep**
- **Positively impacts** those around you
- Gratitude's **benefits** take time
- Gratitude helps even if you don't share it...but **why wouldn't you?**



Resilience

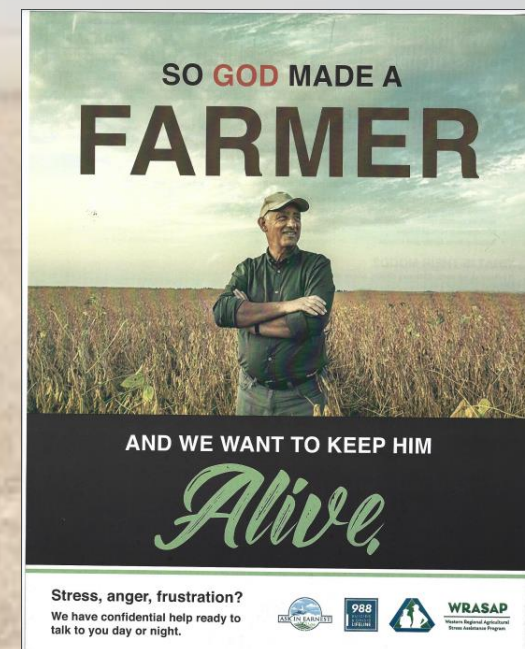
Balance	Support	Need(s)	Courage
Health	What is your emergency checklist for life events?	What do you need?	To ask.....
Spirit	Who is in your phone when things are not balanced?	What do the people around you need?	Be honest with yourself
Relationships	Are you maintaining your safety net?	If you need help—are you asking or just being “tough”?	Lose the fear of failure
Work	Make a list of people who care about you and what is important to you	Bad news doesn’t get better with time	Get help
Balance is like maintaining a healthy weight—like Weight Watchers			Be honest with those who love you or who need to know
Source: David (Dave) Nordel, CMSgt, USAF (ret), RN, BSN, MS			

Support the positive changes in the ag community re: mental health

- Learn more about mental health—it's wonderful **you** are here today!
- Be a **leader**:
 - Bring gatekeeper training to your community
 - Coordinate awareness events, i.e., Out Of The Darkness Walks
- What, and who, is on your **checklist**?
- Whose **checklist** are you on?
- Know **resources**

Using Resources Available to You

- 988lifeline.org
- American Farm Bureau [State of Mind](#)
- [Ag Behavioral Health](#)
- [Ask in Earnest](#)
- [AgrAbility](#)
- [WRASAP](#)
- [Farm Aid Call Center](#) 1-800-FARM-AID
(7:00 AM-8:00 PM Mountain time)



Next Steps for Ask In Earnest



- Continuing to educate and advocate for farmer health and well-being
- Currently certified as a QPR Facilitator; earn Mental Health First Aid Instructor status
- Listen to farmers and help build what is most helpful

Questions & Comments



- ***Ask in Earnest***, and you may save a life
- www.askinearnest.org
- askinearnest@hotmail.com
- @AskInEarnest18 X/Twitter handle
- Facebook, LinkedIn
- ***Thank You!***

