



# Weathering the Storm in Agriculture

*Developing Skills to Cope with Farm Stress*

**Women In Ag**  
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# Different kinds of stress

## *Ordinary Stressors*

- Employment
- Childcare
- Household management
- Financial stability
- Interpersonal relationships

## *Extraordinary Stressors*

- Downturns in the ag economy
- Weather uncertainties
- Labor shortage
- Trade and market uncertainties



# Women in agriculture

- Farm women experience additional stressors
  - Role conflict - home and family matters (“third shift”)
  - Off farm job
- Daughters-in-law carry the most stress (intergenerational tension)
- Agricultural stereotypes
- Lack of perceived authority
- Gender roles and stereotypes
- Lack of access to ag programs and loans



(Berkowitz, A. D. & Perkins, H. W. (1984) & Reynolds, K. (n.d.))

# Relationship signs of stress

- Communication difficulties
- Conflict with family members, others
- Lack of satisfaction
- Verbal or physical outbursts, abuse
- Strained interactions
- Isolation - avoiding people, places & events
- Lack of time with spouse, children, others



(Brotherson & Berg, 2018)

# “Fight-or-flight” or “tend-and-befriend”

- “Typical response” – “fight-or-flight”
  - Men tend to think their way through, look for solutions
  - Women like to talk about problems
- “Tend-or-befriend”
  - Hardwired in DNA – brain chemistry and hormones
  - Oxytocin – “trusting” and “social affiliation” hormone
  - Turn to friends to cope
  - Care taking and seeking out support networks

“In general, when things get rough on the farm, women talk more and men talk less.” Ted Matthews (Spangler, 2018)

(Seaward, B. L. (2015))

# Including children and adolescents

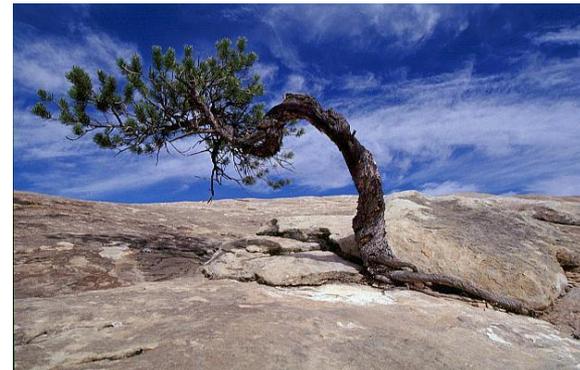
- Can sense changes in family dynamics
- Affects them emotionally, physically and socially
  - Changes in behavior – “acting out” - physically or verbally out of character
  - Trouble sleeping or excessive sleeping
  - Anxiety, depression, mood swings, lack of motivation
  - Isolation, loss of interest in extracurricular activities
  - Changes in friends who influence in negative ways
  - Excessive sickness and absenteeism
  - Experimentation with use of drugs and alcohol



# Cultivating resiliency and hope

**Resilience – ability to recover from, or adjust to, change**

- Individual, family, relationship and farming system resilience
- Strengths based - social support and a sense of belonging to a community
- “What coping skills have you used before that helped you/us bounce back?”



# Nurture relationships

**Good relationships don't just happen.**

- Family, friendships, casual, romantic
  - Open & honest communication
  - Trust
  - Mutual respect
  - Honesty
  - Compromise
  - Supportive
  - Boundaries
  - FUN!



*Most marriage counseling happens right after harvest. If that surprises you, you don't know farming. Ted Mathews*

# Communication is KEY

1. Share everyday happenings
2. Listen attentively
  - Reflective listening – hearing & understanding (content & feelings) & respond with what you heard (content & feelings)
  - “So what you feel is . . . . .”
  - “It sounds like you . . . . .”
3. Be respectful (everyone & their viewpoint)
4. Use “I” statements – avoids blaming
5. Use ‘time outs’ to cool down
6. Be willing to compromise

# Including children and adolescents

- **Provide simple, accurate, developmentally appropriate information**
  - Mistrust can develop if not told the truth
- **Create opportunities for conversation**
  - LISTEN – without problem-solving or judgement
- **Involve them in decision-making and problem-solving**
- **Healthy eating, exercise, sleep**
- **Family time and family activities**
- **Let them know they are loved**



(Norrell-Aitch, K. & Stewart, J., 2008 & Schafer, S. 2019)

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