

May 21, 2022

Despite the recent threat of rain in our weekly forecast, area farmers are making some headway towards completing the 2022 planting season. Driving around the county this week it was nice to see several producers in the fields and even better it was nice to see several acres of corn and beans already emerged and ready for a hopeful growing season. We still have quite a way to go to finish this spring planting season, but I think there is some light at the end of the tunnel as long as Mother Nature keeps giving us some days to progress in the right direction.

Farming can be very stressful at times, just ask anyone involved in agriculture. The struggles we face each farming season carries with it, its own personality and how we each deal with stress is on us. Agricultural families are not the only ones stressed. It seems that since that dreaded thing called COVID became a day-to-day reality, the stressors have kept mounting for many of us. I could go on and on about the different stressors we all face each day but rather I want to address some things we can do to hopefully help us cope with these stressors. May is Mental Health Awareness Month.

We all have our own definition of stress but here is maybe a more official definition. Stress is the response to a perceived demand, internal or external, on our mind, body or emotions. Stress may also be defined as the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change. Many different things can trigger these responses, especially change. Whether a change is significant or not, it may cause stress in a person.

The challenge of stress is how we cope with it. As I have read in many articles, not all stress is bad stress and a little may be healthy. However, chronic stress and stress that persist for a long time, can have a negative effect on our mental, physical, and emotional health. There are short-term and long-term effects of stress that can impact our health. Because of this , it is important to be aware of methods or techniques to cope with stress.

In many articles and reports, the first step to coping is recognizing the signs that you may be experiencing stress. These signs may include difficulty sleeping, increased alcohol and other substance use, poor concentration, being easily angered, feeling depressed and having low energy.

To help your body control stress, practice general healthy habits every day such as:

- Eating a healthy diet
- Getting enough sleep each night
- Getting at least thirty minutes of exercise on five different days each week
- Moderating caffeine intake
- Keeping in touch with friends or loved ones who are sources of emotional support
- Obtaining proper healthcare

I think this statement says a lot for all of us, “Remember that to take care of others, you must take care of yourself.”

From an article provided by the Upper Midwest Agriculture Safety and Health Center, recognize the signs and symptoms in yourself or someone you know. Understand there are things you can do for yourself and others.

For yourself, reach out to loved ones. Talk about how you're feeling. Don't be afraid to talk to friends, clergy, or a medical provide. Reach out to a mental health counselor.

For someone you know, listen attentively and without judgement. Try to understand where they are coming from. Share your concerns about his/her behavior, mood, appearance, etc. Ask questions about changes you observe, encourage them to reach out/tell a family member

There are many resources out there that can be helpful resources. In fact, just this week there was an informational insert in the News Journal that could provide some excellent insight to Mental Health Awareness.

Remember, you are not alone in dealing with stress. If you are feeling stressed take some time for yourself and find avenues that are helpful for you in dealing with the stresses that get you down. Understanding what causes or triggers your mild symptoms and what coping techniques work for you can help manage your mental health.



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