



# Addressing Ag-Related Stress, Self-Care, and Resiliency

PRESENTED BY

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A B O U T

## Dr. Brenda M. Mack, DSW, MSW, LICSW

- Grew-up in a farm family in EGF, MN
- Married to a fourth-generation crop farmer
- Doctorate in Social Work, (DSW-UST), LICSW, researcher, writer, presenter
- 21 years providing therapy & crisis response services in a farm community
- 3rd year Assistant Professor in Social Work at Bemidji State University



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## Before Beginning

- ✔ Information based on my lived experience, professional background and best-practices research.
- ✔ You are an expert in your own life so tailor content that is relevant to you.
- ✔ Some topics may bring up unexpected thoughts or feelings, make sure that you take care of yourself in the moment and reach out to others if you are struggling.
- ✔ The information is not intended to be treatment.

## Ag-Related Stress & COVID-19

“For several years, farmers have faced increasingly high levels of stress as markets tanked, weather destroyed crops, and hard work and long hours proved inadequate to ensure profits. **Now, COVID-19 adds one more burden to an already heavy load.**”

*Simon, n.d.*





## Stress Defined

“Stress is a fact of nature in which forces from the inside or outside world affect the individual, either one's emotional or physical well-being, or both. The individual responds to stress in ways that affect the individual, as well as their environment. Due to the overabundance of stress in our modern lives, we usually think of stress as a negative experience, but from a biological point of view, stress can be a neutral, negative, or positive experience”.

**Source**

<https://www.medicinenet.com/stress/article.htm>

## Signs and Symptoms of Stress

- Disrupted or Excessive Sleep
- Feeling Worried or Sad
- Mood Changes
- Unable to make decisions
- Unable to concentrate
- Physical Appearance Changes
- Headaches
- Upset Stomach
- Withdraw from others
- Feelings of Hopelessness
- Increased alcohol use





## 3-Legged Stool of Self-Care to Reduce Stress



### Relational

Healthy Relationships & Connection to Others



### Physical

Eating/drinking right, sleep, exercise, limit alcohol & caffeine consumption



### Cognitive

Changing negative self-defeating talk to empowering self-talk



## Healthy Relationships and Connections

- Connection is Critical
- Introverts vs. Extroverts
- Ways of connecting
- Religious or Faith-Based Practices
- Social Media (energizing vs depleting)
- Who's your person or people?

## Physical Self-Care

- Eating Healthy
- Drinking Water
- Get a Good Night Sleep
- Exercising
- Limit Alcohol & Caffeine Consumption




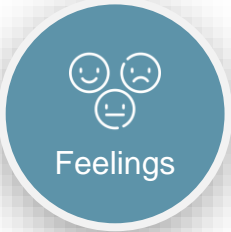

**Self-Talk Worksheet:**  
To deal with Ag-Related Stress

<u>Old Pattern:</u>		<u>New Pattern:</u>
_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	 <p>Thoughts</p> <p>↓</p>  <p>Feelings</p> <p>↓</p>  <p>Behaviors</p>	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

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Cognitive Behavioral Theory  
by Albert Ellis and Aaron Beck)

**Self-Talk Worksheet:**  
To deal with Ag-Related Stress

<u>Old Pattern:</u>		<u>New Pattern:</u>
<p><b>Example 1:</b> I'm a failure at farming</p> <p><b>Example 2:</b> I don't like the way I look, my thighs are huge</p> <p><b>Example 1:</b> Worried, Embarrassed, Angry, Sad, Frustrated</p> <p><b>Example 2:</b> Depressed, Sad, Unmotivated</p> <p><b>Example 1:</b> Verbally "snap" at others; Unable to sleep at night; Drink too much alcohol</p> <p><b>Example 2:</b> Isolate oneself; Stay home rather than going for a walk, to the gym or out for dinner</p>	 <p>Thoughts</p> <p>↓</p>  <p>Feelings</p> <p>↓</p>  <p>Behaviors</p>	<p><b>Example 1:</b> I did everything in my power to get the crop off the field; I never gave up</p> <p><b>Example 2:</b> I am proud of myself for exercising, I have athletic-looking legs</p> <p><b>Example 1:</b> Empathetic, Hopeful, Compassionate</p> <p><b>Example 2:</b> Honest, Empowered, Inspired</p> <p><b>Example 1:</b> Talk calmly with others; Sleep better; Drink in moderation</p> <p><b>Example 2:</b> Exercise; Grab coffee or dinner with a significant other or friend; Go out in public</p>
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# Empowerment (EXAMPLE)

- ✓ **3 Good Things** (Dr. Martin Seligman, Positive Psychology)

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- ✓ Gratitude Journal

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- ✓ Letters of Appreciation

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- ✓ 365 Days of Gratitude

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- ✓ Intentional and Random Acts of Kindness

## 3-Legged Stool Self-Care Plan

(EXAMPLE)

1

Talk to a spouse, friend, or others in Ag about worries and what's going well

2

Drinking 1 liter of water in the morning and 1 in the afternoon

3

5 Minutes of Deep Breathing and Relaxation in the morning

4

Walk (or another form of exercise) for ½ hour 3 X's per week

5

Every night before bed- write down or e-note: 3 Good Things @ your day

## TAKE AWAY

# Create an Individualized 3-Legged Stool Self-Care Plan



Develop, Use and Modify  
Your Personalized  
Self-Care Plan



Post on/in your  
Fridge, Tractor,  
Barn



Take a Picture  
on Your Phone!



Share it with your  
“person” or “people”



Downloadable Fillable  
Template Available on  
NWMF’s website



# Resources

- Minnesota Department of Agriculture
  - <https://www.mda.state.mn.us/about/mnfarmerstress>
- Positive Self-Talk (Thinkup)
  - <https://thinkup.me/>
- Stress-relief and Self-Care Apps: (Calm, Headspace, Happify)
  - <https://www.calm.com/>
  - <https://www.headspace.com/headspace-meditation-app>
  - <https://www.happify.com/>
- Upper Midwest Agriculture Safety and Health Cultivating Resiliency Webinar Series
  - <http://umash.umn.edu/cultivating-resiliency-webinars/>
- Verywell Mind Website
  - <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-coping-strategies-are-effective-3144562>



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Connecting with Others and Practicing Self-Care will Strengthen Our Resiliency and Better Prepares Us to Deal with the Ups and Downs of an Ag-Related Life.

*B.Mack, 2020*





## Contact Information

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