

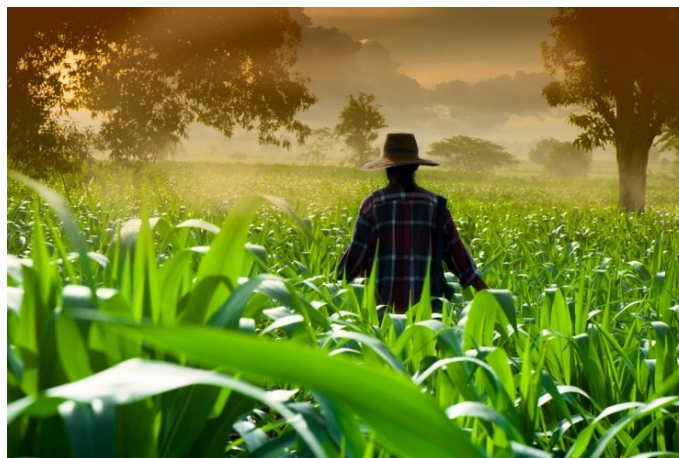
Keep up the Conversation!

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As May winds down, so does Mental Health Awareness Month, but that doesn't mean it we stop talking about mental health. Working in agriculture is often an all-consuming profession. Here are some helpful tips to work on reducing stress and maintaining positive mental health.

Many farmers live where they farm, there is no physical boundary between them and work. Work/life balance is a consistent challenge for many. Are there strategies that might be helpful to farmers in recognizing when and how to draw a line? It's important for them to find ways to create effective boundaries between the various aspects of their lives. Encouraging to think about three things in order to maintain the work-life boundaries that make it easier to function effectively.

- Be explicit with yourself about when you're working, and when you're not working. This could take the form of a schedule or simply setting rules for yourself (like "when I'm in the kitchen, I'm not working"). This will look different for everyone.
- The second strategy is to multitask as little as possible. One of the benefits of drawing these effective boundaries is that it allows you to be fully present in what you're doing in the moment. If you're spending time with your family, for example, and notice your attention wandering back to unfinished work tasks remind yourself to focus on what's happening in front of you.
- The third strategy is to give permission to put things aside when you need to. It can be difficult to allow yourself to take time for exercise when there is work to be done, but it's important to recognize that making time for each of these roles will be helpful in the long run.



So what if someone is still feeling overwhelmed? There are often a lot of continuing stressors going on. Are there coping tactics that can help us to manage how we approach these issues?

- Often times we want to focus on things that we can not control such as weather, politics, or market prices. This can continue the cycle of stress and anxiety. However, we can put emphasis on things we can control such as our reaction to these stressors, identifying when we may need extra support, and utilizing coping strategies.

Finally, farming is a very physical job, so it is easy to convince ourselves that we are getting "exercise" in our day-to-day, but manual labor does not always equal exercise. Highly-repetitive movements that come up in farming could contribute to injuries in the long run if you're not able to incorporate other forms of exercise. In addition to the straightforward physical benefits, it's also helpful to think about exercise as a way to make time for yourself and often times get off the farm.

- Running, walking, or jogging
- Weightlifting
- Swimming
- Riding a bike

As always if you or someone you know is struggling and may be in a crisis, please reach out for support. Do not hesitate to call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255. Check out OSU Extension's resources at go.osu.edu/farmstress

References:

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