

Weekly Article

1-30-2023

Don't Be Afraid to Reach Out for Help

Hello, my name is Richard Purdin with OSU Extension, Ag and Natural Resource Educator, and Community Development Educator for Adams County. I hope to better inform local producers and the public of the latest news in the world of agriculture. The end of January has finally arrived and this Thursday, February 2nd is Groundhog Day. Groundhogs and I don't have the best relationship history, but I have to give them credit, no matter how destructive and frustrating they can be they are determined, and diligent in their work and they have a day dedicated to their weather-predicting abilities! This German tradition actually started with hedgehogs until migration to America when the switch to groundhogs occurred due to their plentiful population. It all began on February 2nd, 1887, in Gobbler's Knob, Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania when a groundhog was evaluated to see if it would see its shadow and run back into its burrow meaning six more weeks of winter or come out and stay outside meaning an early spring. So, you might wonder why February is when Groundhog Day occurs. February is the beginning of the mating season when the males emerge from their burrows to look for a mate, but March is truly when breeding season begins (depending on the weather). No matter what Phil or Buckeye Chuck predicts this week, it is still winter, it is still wet, and still cold. The bright side is with each passing day we gain more daylight and springtime gets closer to reality. Spring is a time of birth, the beginning of life for those plants, animals, and many other organisms. But even with the hopes of new life, there are still many that are struggling both physically and mentally. As you have probably heard me say time and time again, agriculture is not an easy profession and as the industry continuously evolves and expands, producers are constantly trying to keep up. The push for improvement, expansion, and efficiency is a constant for many producers. With this constant push can come constant stress.

The definition of stress is pressure or tension exerted on an object. When I think about stress, I cannot help but recall a time when I was hanging tobacco on some older-tier rails and as I place each stick of tobacco on the rails, I heard cracking and the sounds of wood fibers stretching until the weight of the tobacco overcame the strength of the rails and SNAP! I was a young farmer wanting to get the job done and kept placing more and more weight on the tier rails that were trying to warn me that enough is enough! Often time we as agriculturalists are the same way, we focus on getting the job done and overlook or ignore the warning signs that our bodies are trying to tell us. Warnings might not be as loud and clear as cracking wood and even less clear for the person experiencing the stresses at the time. In my very short career as a farmer and

agricultural professional, I haven't come across many farmers that hate what they do. Agriculture is definitely a labor of love, unfortunately in reality it is just that! Often farmers and agriculture business owners put a lot of time, effort, love, and money into the farm or business and get very little in return for their efforts! Another unfortunate factor is that just like the tobacco crop, certain years have heavier stress factors than others. These factors can include weather changes, economic downturns, loss of market, livestock disease or illnesses, crop loss, and many more. Many of these factors are out of the farmer's control and each day brings an unexpected new unknown. The CDC reports that farmers and others involved in agriculture are 1.5 times more likely to die by suicide than the general public and suicide rates have increased by almost 40% in the last 20 years. The CDC also reports that 25% of people involved in agriculture currently struggle with mental health challenges. There has been a lot of focus on mental health and steps to cope and heal from its effects but unfortunately, many of these steps do not align with the unique lifestyle farmers have (too busy feeding the cows rather than doing yoga with them). Here are 5 steps that you can take to cope with or relieve some of the stress that you might be experiencing.

1. **Talk to Family**- Take time to talk to family members about not just business-related topics but things you like. Some examples could be sports, hobbies, hunting, tractor pulling, or even watching a good John Wayne western movie together!
 2. **Getting plenty of sleep**- This can be a challenge during spring planting and fall harvest season, but it is critical to help your mind and body relax and heal from the day's many stresses. Sleep deprivation is equivalent to having a 0.08 concentration of alcohol in your blood system, slowing reaction time, memory loss, and increased injury due to risky decision-making.
 3. **Eat healthy**- A balanced diet of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and Meat can help boost mood and energy.
 4. **Exercise and break time**- Farmers are bad about confusing work with exercise. Just taking time to walk each day, or just get away from the work for a period of time to recharge.
 5. **Don't be afraid to reach out** call 988 if you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis.
- Adams/Scioto County Forestry Legacy workshop, February 9th at 6:00 pm Located at the Nile Township Community Center, 12099 Ohio River Scenic Byway US 52 Stout, Ohio 45684. Contact Brooks Warner to register for the event at 740-354-7870 or email warner.948@osu.edu
 - Tobacco GAP training will be held on March 1, 2023, at the Raines Farms and Greenhouse 2667 Nicholes Ridge Road Seaman, Ohio 45679.

Ag Educator Words of encouragement – “In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity”
Albert Einstein