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 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## Suggestions for Managing Stress

The past few months have been stressful for farmers here in Southern Ohio, and in many other places in the United States. The current flooding in Nebraska and Iowa are in the news now, but the stress has been going on for several months.

The prices of grain took a hit in the last year, AGAIN. We saw crazy high prices a few years ago in grain and livestock. We knew those prices would not hold up over time, but we were hopeful. Sometimes hope causes people to keep more cows, raise more grain, raise more tobacco, or whatever is your thing, with hope that profits will stay solid.

Now we have dealt with lower prices in the past, not a good thing, but we have been there and done that. On top of the lower prices comes this crazy weather pattern that has caused delays in planting the crops, delays in harvest that sometimes resulted in major losses of crop, stressed livestock that got a double whammy because in many cases the winter feed (hay) was also impacted with the weather. All of this leads to stress for farmers.

The following is from a fellow OSU Extension Educator, Chris Zoller, Agriculture & Natural Resources in Tuscarawas County. Chris gives some good tips for the farmers and those associated with farmers in a farming community.

You have faced several years of poor commodity prices, depressed milk prices, increased input costs, and wet weather. You have looked for areas to reduce costs, evaluated options, implemented changes...and the financial stress continues to take a toll on your physical and mental health. What can you do?

### Mindset

According to the Michigan State University Extension publication “How to Create a Productive Mindset,”...The mind has 70,000 thoughts per day...that’s 70,000 opportunities. The brain is about two percent of your body weight – but uses 20 percent of your energy. Eighty percent of repetitive thoughts are negative, but don’t have to be.

In addition to the Michigan State University Extension publication mentioned earlier, Iowa State University Extension Dairy Specialists Dr. Fred Hall and Dr. Larry Tranel provide the following suggestions for coping with stress:



- Self-Talk – remind yourself that you have been through difficult times before and will do so again.
- Choose words like “calm”, “capable”, and “controlled” to maintain a positive mindset.
- Use deep breathing – do this five times and release slowly.
- Accept the situation and focus on solutions instead of focusing on the problem.
- Avoid negative people.
- Check in on your friends and family. Men generally don’t communicate as well as women. Phone calls or texts to friends and family are simple gestures that can be very comforting and meaningful.
- Don’t shut out family – communicate with members about your worries and concerns. Family can provide support.

### Advisory Team

Assemble a team of professionals to help you analyze your situation and provide suggestions. The team may include your veterinarian, nutritionist, agronomist, lender, accountant, attorney, and Extension Educator. Have these professionals come together to review your past performance, present situation, and goals for the near and short-term. Each professional brings a different perspective to the meeting based on his or her experiences and can be a valuable resource to analyze, answer questions, and provide recommendations.

### Plan

What are your plans for the short-term and long-term? What Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Rewarding, and Timed (SMART) goals will get you where you want to be? Do other members of your family share the same vision?

What if you decide to exit the dairy business? Do you have a written exit plan? There is life after exiting the business. Talk to your attorney and accountant about the sale and tax liabilities.

### Seek Professional Help

There are trained counselors in or near your community available to help. These professionals provide confidential counseling and can suggest options to best manage your situation. Names of counselors available in your area are available by contacting your physician, local health department, pastor, or conducting an online search. Do not be ashamed to seek help!

### Summary

The items presented here are not going to increase milk prices or lower input costs. However, understanding your mindset, assembling an advisory team, developing a plan, and, if necessary, reaching out to use the services of professional counselors can help you better understand your situation and make well-informed decisions.

## Sources:

Ohio State University Extension Dairy Team, publications available at: <https://dairy.osu.edu/>  
Helping Farm Men Under Crisis, Dr. Larry Tranel, Dairy Specialist, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

Market Reality, Stress, and Grief, Dr. Fred Hall, Dairy Specialist, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

How to Cultivate a Productive Mindset, Michigan State University Extension, [msue.msu.edu/managingstress](http://msue.msu.edu/managingstress)

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## **Dates to Remember**

March 29-30 Small Farm Conference at OSU South Centers. Go to <http://osusouthcenters.osu.edu> for details or call 800-297-2072.

April 11 2019 Perennial School at the Clermont County Fairgrounds in Owensville. Starts at 8:00 a.m. Register before April 1 for \$40. After April 1 is \$50. Cost includes a continental breakfast, buffet lunch and handouts. To register go to [Clermont.osu.edu](http://Clermont.osu.edu) or call 513-732-7070. Payable by cash, check or money order to “OSU Extension Clermont.” Please return registration form with payment to PO Box 670, Owensville, OH 45160 by April 1. Sorry no refunds.

April 13 Ohio Tobacco Museum Reverse Raffle at Ripley Elem. School. Tickets still available.