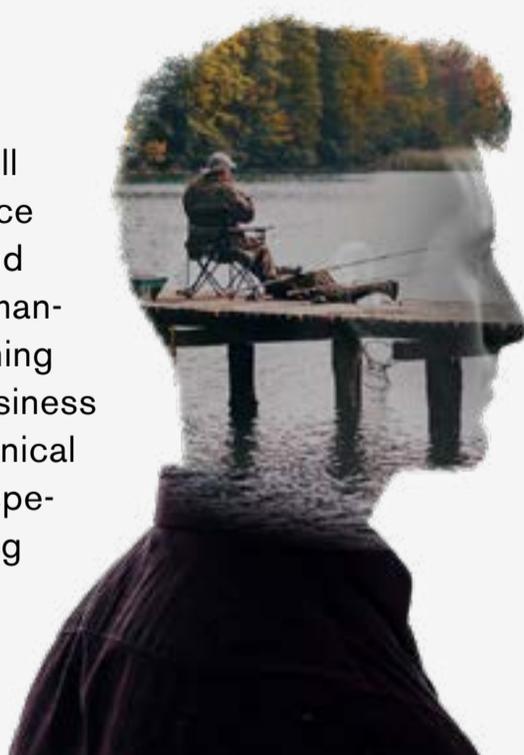


7 STEPS TO REDUCE STRESS



By Sara Schafer

These strategies will make a big difference to your outcomes and outlook. You need to manage your stress to keep it from ruining precious relationships and vital business partnerships, says Val Farmer, a clinical psychologist and author who has specialized in rural mental health during his 30-year career. Consider these suggestions on how to cope with financial and farm stress.



1 Face your problems

“Don’t let your pride get in the way of making hard decisions,” Farmer says. “Others are in the same boat.” Find someone to talk to – a spouse, friend, counselor or pastor. Journaling about your feelings can also help you reflect and cope, adds Brandy VanDeWalle, University of Nebraska Extension educator.



2 Gather information and advice

Solid information shines a bright light on problems and takes away fear. This also applies to communication and conflict situations in the family, Farmer says.



3 Build in breaks

Ensure you have a gap or two in your day for a mental break. “By building gaps in your day, you can allow time to handle some unexpected interruptions that occur,” VanDeWalle says.



4 Unplug for a bit

Set boundaries with your phone and email time. “We all get inundated with so much information, so practice on being in the moment,” VanDeWalle suggests. Use this time to unwind, relax and rejuvenate. This can be a simple afternoon off, day trip or just a fun evening with friends and good conversation.



5 Expand your life beyond agriculture

“Join a book club or a card club or have some friends who aren’t related to agriculture, just so you can have a break,” suggests Adrienne DeSutter, who specializes in behavioral health, specifically agriculture wellness.



6 Take care of yourself

Exercise, a well-balanced diet and adequate sleep will pay dividends. What is good for the body is also good for the mind, VanDeWalle says. Plan on 30 minutes of daily activity.



7 Keep a positive attitude

You can’t control some of the events that happen to you, but you can control how you react to them, Farmer says. Acceptance of losses, setbacks and disappointments helps us deal with life’s problems and injustices. Worry about the things you can do something about.