Mental Health Awareness Month Promotional Toolkit

Extension
University of Missouri

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part of Agriculture
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Purpose

Rural Missouri is historically strong and resilient while dealing with long work hours, weather, disease and insects, government regulations, machinery breakdowns, crop uncertainty, livestock problems, and commodity prices. Worry, isolation, loneliness, stress, and anxiety are challenges many face. This reminds us of the importance of evaluating personal health and wellbeing during Mental Health Awareness Month.

According to the February 2020 “Growing Stress on the Farm, The Expanding Economic and Mental Health Disparities in Rural Missouri” report, rural Missouri’s mental health crisis is more challenging than in urban areas. It may be especially severe in the agricultural community. Recent studies, media coverage and congressional action suggest that farmers and ranchers face a unique set of external challenges. These result in adverse mental health outcomes in agricultural communities. Pervasive stigma and geographic barriers to accessing mental health care sometimes prevent those seeking behavioral health services for stress, anxiety and depression from receiving it in rural Missouri.

During previous Mental Health Awareness campaigns, messages about mental health awareness and suicide prevention have not specifically targeted rural, agricultural communities. In response to this growing concern, MU Extension developed this toolkit to join the conservation during the national Mental Health Awareness Month in May.

Please join Missouri’s mental health in rural communities’ movement and national efforts to raise awareness about mental health. This toolkit offers practical resources to help strengthen farmer resilience with coping mechanisms to maintain balance and protect their mental health.

This promotional toolkit is intended to provide resources for information for farmers, their families, and farm-related organizations seeking assistance with farm stress and other behavioral health issues.
Outreach Ideas

Start the conservation in your community about mental health by:

- Sharing social media messages, infographics, articles and resources on social media.
- Liking and sharing posts from the Show-Me Strong Farm Families Facebook page.
- Creating a watch party on Facebook or hosting a live screening of a video on mental health and wellbeing.
- Visiting the Missouri Department of Mental Health website and sharing rural mental health resources.
- Printing resources to share with farmers, ranchers, and community members.
- Coordinating with MU Extension specialists to schedule/host a MU Extension program on rural mental health and wellbeing. See pages 14 and 15.
News Release

[CITY WHERE PARTNER REPRESENTATIVE IS HEADQUARTERED IN ALL CAPS,] Mo. - University of Missouri Extension field specialist [name] or [insert partner representative name here] says May is Mental Health Awareness Month.

"In 2022, Missouri farmers, ranchers and their families face tough challenges," says [last name of specialist]. “Economic uncertainties, changes in commodity prices and ongoing weather issues add to the daily stresses of farming and ranching."

Rural Missourians also sometimes encounter barriers to receiving help in a timely manner because mental health services may not be available in all rural counties.

MU Extension covers the 114 counties in Missouri. “The toolkit, provides resources and tools to promote and support the mental health and well-being of farmers, ranchers and their families,” says Karen Funkenbusch, MU Extension health and safety specialist.

Throughout May, MU Extension will join the national Mental Health Awareness campaign to provide resources designed to be useful to farming and rural communities where they live, work and play.

“With increased pressures on today’s farmers, we want to let farmers know there are ways to fight stigma and provide a safe environment to address mental health concerns of farmers,” says [insert partner representative name here]. “We want to help our rural communities develop and maintain a support system for our farmers.”

For more information, go to [www.extension.missouri.edu/xxxxx], or contact [partner representative] at [partner representative email.]
Interview Talking Points

Suggested talking points for Mental Health Awareness Month.

- May is Mental Health Awareness Month.
- Many resources are available to rural Missourians to help with ongoing stresses, but sometimes it is difficult to find them. MU Extension and the Missouri Department of Agriculture are working together to help farmers, their friends and families, and rural communities find resources.
- Health care resources are not available in rural areas. Factors such as transportation, cost and stigma create barriers to seeking rural mental health resources and/or treatment. Farmers, who are self-employed, may not have insurance coverage for mental health issues.
- Farmers face unique challenges because there are many things beyond their control such as the weather and markets. Planting time is one of the busiest and most stressful times of the year for farmers.
- Mental health issues are not unique. 1 in 5 people will experience mental illness during their lifetime. Between 2003 and 2017, the suicide rate among rural Missourians grew by 78%. Hospital emergency department visits for suicide attempts or ideation grew by 177%.¹
- While the overall suicide rate declined in 2020, it rose slightly in those under 24 and preliminary data suggest that the suicide rate increased in Missouri during 2021.²
- In early May and September, Missouri typically experiences a peak in suicide behavior and deaths.²
- Many farm and ranch families experience financial and emotional stress. To assist farm families during these stressful times, the “Farm and Ranch Family Stress and Depression: A Checklist and Guide for Making Referrals” guide sheet can be helpful.

* To find more Missouri facts and resources, see the Missouri Department of Mental Health “Suicide Infographic 2019” and the American Foundation of Suicide Prevention “Suicide Facts & Figures: Missouri 2022”.
Social Media Post

Mental Health Awareness

• Suicide is growing at an alarming rate in rural Missouri. Between 2003 and 2017, the suicide rate among rural Missourians grew by 78%, and throughout the last decade hospital emergency department visits for suicide attempts or ideation increased 177%.¹

• Farming is a stressful business that typically requires long hours in predominantly isolated working conditions. Farmers tend to live in communities where access to mental health care is limited by distance, stigma or cost due to insurance status.¹

• Rural communities may have limited access to healthcare services, which can make it difficult for farm and ranch families to receive support when they experience a mental health crisis. Poor mental health can make it difficult to manage other common stressors.¹

• Stigma may not directly affect you, but it may prevent 1 in 5 Americans with mental health conditions from seeking help. Rural, agricultural communities can be highly influenced by stigma. Take the StigmaFree quiz to see if you might be affected: https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Pledge-to-Be-StigmaFree ³

• Suicide prevention specialists and mental health care providers talk about the importance of suicide prevention among farmers and ranchers: https://youtu.be/rWDSKClZWDA ³

• Everyone has stress and a moderate amount of stress is normal. Read more about the different types of stress and how they can affect you as an individual at: https://extension.missouri.edu/news/when-stress-is-not-normal-3454

• According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health (HHSOMH), Black Americans are 20% more likely to experience serious mental illness than the general population. ⁴

• Children’s Mental Health Week is the first full week in May each year. Find resources to promote Children’s Mental Health Week at: https://namimissouri.org/get-involved/youth/childrens-mental-health-week/
Referral Resources

- Preventing suicide means being informed and knowing what to do when you or someone you know is having a difficult time. Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for free, confidential assistance 24/7.

- Suicide Safe is a free mobile app that helps providers integrate suicide prevention strategies into their practice and address suicide risk among their patients. Download the app today from the app store. [https://store.samhsa.gov/product/suicide-safe](https://store.samhsa.gov/product/suicide-safe)

- Five steps to help someone at risk: ask, keep them safe, be there, help them connect, and follow up. Learn more about each of the 5 steps at: [https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/5-action-steps-for-helping-someone-in-emotional-pain/index.shtml](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/5-action-steps-for-helping-someone-in-emotional-pain/index.shtml)

- Comments about suicide should never be discounted. If you or someone you know is contemplating suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

- “Missouri 2-1-1” is a free referral and informational helpline that connects people with a wide range of health and human services 24/7. Simply dial 2-1-1 from any phone.

- Youth.gov has many resources for youth and families facing mental health issues. Learn more and find resources for youth at: [https://youth.gov/youth-topics/youth-mental-health](https://youth.gov/youth-topics/youth-mental-health)

- Mental Health conditions typically begin during childhood adolescence or young adulthood. Make things easier and explore information, tips and resources for getting youth treatment, support and accommodations they need at: [https://nami.org/Your-Journey/Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults](https://nami.org/Your-Journey/Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults)

- Military OneSource does not provide health care services, but it does point members of the military family to resources available to help. Learn more about Military OneSource at: [https://www.militaryonesource.mil/health-wellness/mental-health/](https://www.militaryonesource.mil/health-wellness/mental-health/)
- The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available for everyone. Find resources specific to your or someone you care about at: https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/#.

Recognizing Signs and Symptoms

- Individuals experiencing a mental health crisis may not even realize it. Identifiers of someone who may be at risk include: change in routine, decline in the care of animals, increase in illnesses, increase in farm accidents, or decline in appearance of farm.⁶

- Sometimes you NEED help. Sometimes you ARE the help. Learn about signs and symptoms of stress on the farm or ranch. Addressing stress is important for prevention of anxiety and depression: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jt9Tt3CcJuY&feature=youtu.be³

- Farm life is a busy lifestyle. If you are caring for your mind, body, and soul but still feel like you are struggling with your mental health, visit http://www.mhascreening.org to check your symptoms. Screening is free and confidential.³

- Men and women cope with stress differently. Men are less likely to talk about stress. Men escape by trying to get away physically or by denying there is a problem. They may cover stress up with drugs or alcohol. Men may also get angry and aggressive in response to stress.

- Men and women cope with stress differently. Women are more likely to "tend and befriend." They reach out to friends and family to talk things through and gain support with their problems.

- Stress can surface in the form of physical, emotional, or behavioral changes depending on the person and the situation. Learn more about recognizing stress at: https://dmh.mo.gov/media/pdf/recognize-and-manage-stress-farm-life
• Do you have a loved one who may be experiencing stress on the farm or ranch? Chronic stress can lead to anxiety and depression. It is important to check the signs and symptoms. [https://extension.missouri.edu/media/wysiwyg/Extensiondata/Pro/AgrAbility/Docs/StressSignsSymptoms.pdf](https://extension.missouri.edu/media/wysiwyg/Extensiondata/Pro/AgrAbility/Docs/StressSignsSymptoms.pdf)

• Be proactive and talk to your health care provider. Ask about potential signs of stress, anxiety, or depression.7

• You know better than anyone else how you are doing emotionally. It is important to check in with yourself and prioritize your mental health.

**Managing Stress**

• Manage and alleviate your stress by taking time to take care of yourself. Set limits on how much time you spend reading or watching the news. You can stay up to date on the news, but make sure to take time away to focus on things in your life that you can control.

• Chronic and uncontrolled stress can be detrimental to your health and interpersonal relationships. Learn ways to manage stress in your life: [https://ag-safety.extension.org/production-agriculture-and-stress/](https://ag-safety.extension.org/production-agriculture-and-stress/)

• Work and life create stress for all of us and we all manage and cope with stress differently. Here are resources to help you manage stress in your life. [https://extension.missouri.edu/news/personal-resources-to-manage-stress-3456](https://extension.missouri.edu/news/personal-resources-to-manage-stress-3456)

• Farming and ranching are stressful occupations. It is important to know how to manage stress levels and reduce the effects of unwanted stress: [https://dmh.mo.gov/media/pdf/recognize-and-manage-stress-farm-life](https://dmh.mo.gov/media/pdf/recognize-and-manage-stress-farm-life)

• Build fun and relaxation into your daily and long-term plans. Think of something you can do regularly, even if you can only take five minutes a day. Once you have built five minutes into each day, try to increase relaxation time little by little.

• Approaches that focus on relaxation can help a variety of health conditions. Learn about relaxation techniques and which technique is right for you: [https://nccih.nih.gov/health/stress/relaxation.htm#hed2](https://nccih.nih.gov/health/stress/relaxation.htm#hed2)
• Farmers and ranchers often work long hours and eat meals on the go. Healthy, regular eating is essential. Pack fruits and vegetables, whole grain snacks, and plenty of water for long days in the field.

• Take care of your physical health to help lower your stress. Take a break to focus on positive parts of your life, like connections with loved ones.

• Research shows the benefits of exercise go beyond just physical well-being. Physical activities, like walking, biking and tai chi, can help reduce feelings of depression and stress, enhance mood and overall emotional well-being, increase energy levels, and improve sleep.9

Hashtags:
• #MentalHealthMonth
• #MentalHealthAwareness
Infographics

Common Warning Signs of Mental Illness
How to Deal with Stress and Anxiety
It’s Okay to Talk About Suicide
Getting the Right Start: Student Guide to Mental Health
Suicide Prevention Facts and Resources in Missouri
Taking Charge of Your Mental Health
Want to Know How to Help a Friend?: Student Guide to Mental Health

Videos

Agriculture Mental Health Motion Graphic from Ag Health and Safety Alliance
Farm Stress: You Are Not Alone from Douglas County Kansas
Suicide Prevention in Rural Communities from I-CASH Iowa Ag Safety
The Surprising Rate of Farmer Suicide | Listen to America from HuffPost
Understanding Key Stresses in Farming and Ranching from NDSU Extension
**Articles**

Chronic Stress Leads to Health Problems
Come Together to Manage Stress on the Farm
Have You had 15 Laughs Today?
How to Talk to a Man About His Mental Health
Mental Health Issues Facing the Black Community
New Research Identifies Behavioral Health Crisis in Agriculture
Personal Resources to Manage Stress
Suicide Prevention for Men
Supporting Farmers’ Mental Wellness
When Stress is Not Normal
Worries Within

**Print Resources**

Farm and Ranch Family Stress and Depression: A Checklist and Guide for Making Referrals from MU Extension
Farm Families and Mental Health from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
How Stress Affects Your Health from American Psychological Association
Missouri Ask Listen Refer from Missouri Department of Mental Health
Signs and Symptoms of Stress from MU Extension, Missouri Department of Agriculture, and Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center (UMASH)
Stress Management and the Challenge of Balance from MU Extension
Suicide Lifeguard from Missouri Institute of Mental Health
Suicide-Proofing Your Home from MU Extension
MU Extension Programs

Health Information for Men

“Health Information for Men” (HIM) program aims to help change life expectancy for American men. Through lessons that cover the latest finding on health-related topics ranging from hypertension to sleep, HIM provides the information needed to improve their health.

Mental Health First Aid Training

“Mental Health First Aid” is a course that teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The training gives you the skills you need to reach out and provide initial help and support to someone who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem or experiencing a crisis.

Missouri AgrAbility Project

The purpose of the Missouri AgrAbility Project is to help increase the likelihood that farmers, ranchers, farm workers, and farm family members who are limited by any type of disability or chronic health condition employed in production agriculture or agriculture-related occupations become more successful.

Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR)

“QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer)” is a one-hour online program. A certified QPR Gatekeeper instructor with MU Extension will help participants recognize the warning signs for suicide, and learn how to intervene by using the three-step QPR method. Participants will become certified QPR Gatekeepers prepared to “Ask a question, save a life.”
Taking Care of You

“Taking Care of You” is a stress management program developed by an interdisciplinary MU Extension team. This research-based, multi-session program offers practical strategies and experiences to help you deal with stress in your life. Managing life’s challenges in a healthy way allows you to take better care of yourself and your overall health. Each session week you will explore topics through small group discussion, self-reflection, and activities.

Tai Chi for Arthritis and Falls Prevention

“Tai Chi for Arthritis and Falls Prevention” is designed to improve multiple aspects of health through slow, gentle movements that can be practiced almost anywhere. The degree of exertion can be easily adjusted, making this program suitable for adults of all levels and abilities. You will learn warmup exercises, six basic and six advanced moves and a cooldown during 16 one-hour classes. Harmony of inner and outer self comes from integrating mind and body, which can be achieved through the ongoing practice of tai chi.

Weather the Storm in Agriculture: How to Cultivate a Productive Mindset

Weather the Storm in Agriculture focuses on helping farmers and their families understand the effects of stress on the mind and body and how to manage it effectively during difficult times.

Youth Mental Health First Aid Training

“Youth Mental Health First Aid” teaches you how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders. This training gives adults who work with youth the skills they need to reach out and provide initial support to adolescents (ages 12-18) who may be developing a mental health or substance use problem and help connect them to the appropriate care.
The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255), provides 24/7 free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals. The lifeline is available for everyone to find resources specific to an individual visit https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/help-yourself/#.

Starting July 16, 2022, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline will be available for mental health or emotional crisis situations by calling 988. 988 has been designated as the new three-digit dialing code that will route callers to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

When people call, text, or chat 988, they will be connected to trained counselors that are part of the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline network. These trained counselors will listen, understand how their problems are affecting them, provide support, and connect them to resources if necessary.

The current Lifeline phone number (1-800-273-8255) will always remain available to people in emotional distress or suicidal crisis, even after 988 is launched nationally.
Missouri Referral Resources

Access Crisis Intervention (ACI) Hotline

“ACI” provides access to services for individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis. Callers will have access to behavioral health crisis services. The hotline provides free, confidential assistance 24/7. Visit the website to find the “ACI” hotline number for your county.

Iowa Concern

Iowa Concern provides stress counselors, an attorney for legal education, information, and referral services for a variety of services that Missourians can access through MU Extension and a North Central Region Farm and Ranch Alliance Network federal grant. The toll-free number, live chat, and website are available 24/7. 800-447-1985

Missouri 2-1-1

“Missouri 2-1-1” is a free referral and informational helpline that connects people with a wide range of health and human services 24/7. Simply dial 2-1-1 from any phone.

Missouri Suicide Prevention Network (MSPN)

MSPN’s goal is to coordinate and develop implementation of the Missouri Suicide Prevention Plan, based on the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention.

Find the Missouri 24/7 Crisis Lines for your county here.

The Crisis Text Line can be reached by texting “MOSAFE” to 741741.

MU Psychological Recovery Telepsychology Services

The MU Psychological Services Clinic offers Skills for Psychological Recovery (SPR) Telepsychology services to help adults and youth cope with anxiety and stress. To request services, call 573-882-5808, email adpsc@umsystem.edu or visit the website.

North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center

The North Central Farm and Ranch Assistance Center is a 12-state, 15-partner collaborative to create and expand stress management and mental health resources and services for agricultural producers and stakeholders in the North Central Region.
Acknowledgements

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Have a resource to share?

If you know of a farm-related resource that is not included in this document, please contact Karen Funkenbusch.

Disclaimer: The University of Missouri Extension, Missouri Department of Agriculture and USDA NIFA Farm and Ranch Stress Alliance Network do not have formal relationships with any external resources.
Endnotes


Bibliography


Agriculture Mental Health Motion Graphic. (2019, March 13). Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jt9Tt3CcJuY

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Suicide Prevention in Rural Communities. (2018, December 19). Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rWDSKCnZWDA

Suicide Prevention in Rural Communities. (2018, December 19). Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rWDSKCnZWDA

Take a Mental Health Test. (2021, November 22). Retrieved from https://screening.mhanational.org/screening-tools/
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