



My Coping Strategies Plan

A helpful step in managing stresses in farming and ranching is to consider the “tools” or “strategies” that are available for dealing with particular stresses. This handout provides a list of useful coping “tools” that can be part of your toolbox for managing individual, family or farming/ranching stresses.

Strategies for the Coping Toolbox

Physical	Mental	Emotional / Spiritual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a medical checkup • Eat a healthful breakfast • Drink four to eight glasses of water daily • Eat more fruits, vegetables and healthful snacks • Exercise at least 20 minutes daily (walk, swim, ride a bike, etc.) • Get at least seven to eight hours of restful sleep • Receive a neck or back massage • Take a relaxing bath or shower • Hug a loved one or friend • Practice restful, deep or slow breathing • Abstain from alcohol, tobacco or other drugs • Do gentle stretching during a break or to warm up or cool down 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take 10 minutes and reflect on your blessings • Write your thoughts in a journal or notebook • Listen to relaxing music • Spend 30 minutes doing something with your hands (draw, carve, etc.) • Read a book you enjoy • Watch TV or videos that make you laugh • Do a hobby • Attend a class or seminar to learn something new or of interest to you • Visit with a counselor or spiritual leader • Reach out to someone for support or help • Spend 10 minutes to plan your day and priorities • Take regular five- to 10-minute breaks in your day to relax and recharge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell a loved one what you appreciate about him/her • Play with a child or grandchild • Volunteer to help with a cause important to you • Go out for a meal with a friend or loved one • Reflect on and forgive yourself for mistakes • Share concerns with a counselor or other professional • Explore your spiritual life and activities • Pray or meditate • Do random acts of kindness • Express “thank you” to someone daily (send a note, etc.) • Write down three things you are grateful for daily • Go for a walk or drive in nature

Strategies for the Coping Toolbox (continued)

Personal / Relational	Work / Professional	Financial / Practical
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean or organize your personal space(s) • Reflect on and write down your goals • Spend time with a pet • Take 15 minutes each day to have uninterrupted conversation with a spouse or family member • Spend time playing games with family members • Learn more about your family history • Begin or renew a friendship • Get involved or stay connected with a group of friends • Plan a getaway with a family member • Go on a vacation • Eat or make your favorite meal • Do an activity you personally enjoy (fishing, see a movie, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on factors you can control in your work • Take time for lunch and a “work break” daily • Plan your next day at the end of the work day and set priorities ahead of time • Be flexible with time and tasks as things come up • Set boundaries and do not overcommit yourself • Say “no” more often • Do not let the farm operation intrude on all other aspects of life • Talk to other farmers about their strategies • Take a seminar and learn new ways to handle issues • Seek feedback on your farm operation and ways to grow or improve • Schedule time away from work to relax and then take the time • Minimize and resolve conflicts with others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess your family finances and needs • Create a family budget and live within your means • Learn new strategies to stretch your family finances • Schedule time to organize your records monthly • Take a seminar to learn more about financial management • Spend 15 minutes a day reviewing your tasks and setting priorities • Select three healthy habits you will try to practice daily • Ask for positive feedback from others and build on it • Ask for constructive feedback from others and learn from it • Investigate new ways for doing things in your work • Read something new every day • Let go of what you cannot control

Steps to a More Sustainable Lifestyle – At Home and On the Farm

Just as farms need to be operated in a sustainable way that preserves resources for the long term, an individual's life needs to be managed in a sustainable way for long-term well-being. Feeling overly tired, overwhelmed by stresses or under constant pressure is not a recipe for a sustainable lifestyle.

Plan your "12 Steps to a More Sustainable Lifestyle" by **selecting and prioritizing two strategies for each category** from the "Coping Toolbox" list (or others that make sense to you). Seek to review and incorporate these strategies daily and weekly for a four-week period and see if your life feels healthier and less stressful. Also, share and discuss these strategies with someone you trust and visit twice a week to assess and encourage progress in your efforts.

Physical	<hr/> <hr/>
Mental	<hr/> <hr/>
Emotional / Spiritual	<hr/> <hr/>
Personal / Relational	<hr/> <hr/>
Work / Professional	<hr/> <hr/>
Financial / Practical	<hr/> <hr/>

Developed by North Dakota State University Extension and used with permission of the authors and NDSU. Publications from Kansas State University are available at: www.bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu. Date shown is that of publication or last revision. Contents of this publication may be freely reproduced for educational purposes. Credit Sean Brotherson and Lindy Berg, *Handout 3: My Coping Strategies Plan*, Kansas State University, June 2018.

Visit the K-State Families website for more information about families and stress: www.ksre.ksu.edu/families

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service
MF3418

June 2018

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, as amended. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating, John D. Floros, Director.