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Farm related stress and its management

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Abstract

Present day farmers are submitted to various stresses. When the farmers are not able to overcome the stresses while fighting, they become disabled. Farmers under stress may show cognitive, emotional, physical and behavioural symptoms. Social support systems improve the mental health of farmers. Training through extension educators, human resource management specialists, extension educators, farmer associations, farm owners can help farmers and farm families to overcome problems. By doing Exercises and other physical activities stress can be lessened.

Keywords: Stresses, emotional, social support, training, exercises

Introduction

While facing with a stressor, one's brain and body respond. A series of chemical reactions may happen that one may engage with or run away from the stressor. Two hormones are released. One hormone is adrenaline, which prepares muscles for exertion. The other hormone is cortisol which regulates the body functions. One will be disabled, if the stressor is more frightening (Fink, 2010) [1]. Stress can predict the farm injury and resulting safety behaviours (Xiao *et al.*, 2014) [2]. Stress connects financial problems and injury in farming (Thu *et al.*, 1997) [3].

Causes of stress among farmers

While during strenuous physical work or during warm weather, drinking of sufficient water is essential. For knowing hydrated or not, the person should check the colour of urine. One will know he has not drunk enough water if it is anything other than relatively clear (NIOSH, 2017) [4].

More rates of depression and suicide are found among the people working in agriculture due to more farming stress. As found by National Institute of Mental Health (2018) [5] some common symptoms of depression are consistent sad, worried mood, desperation feeling or negative thought, guilty feeling, thinking no usefulness. Other symptoms are decreased energy, talking more slowly, showing less interest in hobbies, unable to keep concentration. There may be some symptoms may be unable to take decision, facing problem in sleeping, appetite changes, thoughts of suicide, more sleeping or arousing in the early morning. If these symptoms are continuing will result in depression.

Some events and situations that affect stress level in farming are more debt loads, government regulations, more interest rate, livestock problems, uncertainty in crop yield, long hours working, and weather. There may be difference of opinion with other family members regarding farming operations affecting stress level of farmers (Bean and Nolan, 2008) [6].

Capacity for finding alternative solutions to complex problems is diminished due to stress. For taking sound decisions, it is a problem (Morgado *et al.*, 2015) [7]. A family can be paralysed by stress.

Some of the cognitive symptoms are inability to concentrate, memory loss, poor decision, continuous running thoughts, constant worry, seeing only the negative aspect. Emotional symptoms are general sadness, anxiety and agitation, unsteadiness, irritability or anger, isolation. Physical symptoms are body pain, diarrhea, nausea, recurring cold, low sex drive. Behavioural symptoms are change in eating habits, sleeping habits, carelessness about responsibilities, more alcohol use, smoking and nervous habits (Segal *et al.*, 2020) [8].

Remedial measures

Many dislike the record keeping. There should be a long term plan for keeping the records in a

nice way and for well maintenance. Resources available at the present time should be looked in details and accordingly planning should be done. The extension and farm management specialists, accountants, state and local agencies and lenders can help for planning, setting of goals and record keeping (Brotherson, 2017) ^[9].

Damaging effects of stress can be relieved by stress. Laughter can change the adverse effect due to a perceived situation. Laughing can make easier to connect with other people and it can help for regaining perspective. Gathering places are very much popular during difficult times (Donham & Thelin, 2016) ^[10].

Exercise can relieve from stress (Edenfield & Bluementhal, 2011) ^[11]. During stressful situations extra energy is generated by the chemicals released in the body and physical activity is essential for providing the outlet for this extra energy. Exercise can keep one's stress responses in check. Exercise is required for good decision making and problem solving.

Use of drug, alcohol, tobacco is harmful as these have bad consequences and one should avoid these unhealthy de-stress methods. These substances may affect our perception. In the long run the problems become worse. Drug or alcohol abuse can damage the relationship with others and causes farm or roadways injuries. One should ask for help how to refrain from using drugs, alcohol, tobacco and regarding queries about health issues, personal safety and safety of a loved one. During these times, one should ask for support and cooperation (Donham & Thelin, 2016) ^[10].

Conclusion

There is online farm coaching provided by the University of Maine Cooperative Extension and it helps with stress management and communication. The problems on the farm and within families are solved here. The assistance is provided for stress reduction and wellbeing. The participants are an extension educator, a human resource specialist, farmer owners and others (Apnews, 2020) ^[12]. In rural communities, social support is the most important predictor of subjective wellbeing for men (Kutek *et al.*, 2011) ^[13]. For farmers' mental health, social support is very much valuable (McLaren *et al.*, 2009) ^[14]. Farmers feel the stress throughout farm operations. There is farm stress management online training course launched by Farm Credit, American Farm Bureau and National Farmers Union. Michigan State University Extension and University of Illinois Extension have developed this. Farmers and farm families can identify and manage stress by it. They can get the skills to find the sources of stress and manage the stress. The participants can get help for knowing the warning signs of stress, suicide intentions and effective communication strategies. By this, the farmers and ranchers can get the proper resources and suitable mental health (Zimmerman, 2020) ^[15].

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