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1-800-547-3276 nyfarmnet.org

## How Farmers Can Cope with Stress

Farmers and farm families are faced with a variety of stressors on a daily basis. Learning to manage feelings and behaviors during hectic times takes time, practice, and help from a professional. Farms of all sizes are feeling the impact of deteriorating economic conditions in New York's agricultural sector.

Some stress in everyday life is normal, and can help us meet daily goals and expectations, both personal and professional. Stress becomes a negative force when it is severe, prolonged, and leads to an acute stress response, or "flight or fight" response. Signs of increased stress may include feeling depressed, feeling irritable and impatient, sleep disturbances, feeling overwhelmed, and lacking energy and motivation with usual tasks, among others.

To relax and manage stresses well during chaotic farming seasons takes discipline, practice, and mindfulness. Following are some techniques individuals may use to help cope with stress in their daily lives and on the farm.

- **Take care of yourself.** Take care of your body. Exercise, eat well-balanced meals, get plenty of rest. Try to avoid stimulants like caffeine or tobacco, or using alcohol or other drugs.
- **Take a break.** Park the tractor and take a walk to clear your head. Sometimes events on the news, online, or in the newspaper can add to your stress. Schedule information breaks – turn off the television, put away your phone, and focus on something else that you enjoy. Take time to balance your work and play.
- **Talk with others.** Share your problems and how you are feeling and coping with a family member, friend, counselor, doctor, or clergy. Talking with someone may help you feel better. In turn, sharing your experience with someone else who may also be struggling, and giving them support may also help you.
- **Follow a normal routine, as much as possible.** Wake up and go to sleep at your usual times. Eat meals at regular times. Continue to go to work, school, church, or other community meetings. Engage with friends and family.

Sometimes taking healthy steps on your own to lower stress is not enough, and that is ok. Recognize when you need more help. If problems continue, or you are thinking about suicide, talk to a doctor, social worker, or professional counselor.

### NY FarmNet

1-800-547-3276, [www.nyfarmnet.org](http://www.nyfarmnet.org)

### National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-8255 (TALK), [www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

### Crisis Text Line

Text "START" to 741-741, [www.crisistextline.org](http://www.crisistextline.org)

### New York State County Mental Health Directory

[http://www.clmhd.org/contact\\_local\\_mental\\_hygiene\\_departments/](http://www.clmhd.org/contact_local_mental_hygiene_departments/)