



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 wellness or coping “tools” that can be part of your wellness toolbox for managing individual, family or farming/ranching stresses. Also, you can use this resource to create your own “action plan” for a healthy lifestyle—at home and on the farm.

Strategies for the Wellness 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 that person• 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 Wellness 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, seeing 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

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal green ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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 “Wellness 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	<div></div> <div></div>
Mental	<div></div> <div></div>
Emotional/ Spiritual	<div></div> <div></div>
Personal/ Relational	<div></div> <div></div>
Work/ Professional	<div></div> <div></div>
Financial/ Practical	<div></div> <div></div>

My Healthy Lifestyle Partners

List two people you will share your plan with and discuss your healthy lifestyle efforts twice a week.

- Partner 1 _____
- Partner 2 _____

Selected Resources List – Managing Farm and Ranch Stress

This is a short list of selected resources that may be useful for finding further information and support in the process of working in agriculture and related fields, managing stress and accessing resources.

Farm and Financial Management Resources

- **Cooperative Extension Service and state Extension Service programs** — Contact your county or state office of the Cooperative Extension Service for information and programs on farm and financial management. Link: <https://nifa.usda.gov/extension>
- **U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency** — Link: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/>

Farming/Ranching and Stress Resources

- **Visit the NDSU Farm Stress website for further information.** NDSU Extension provides a website with information on managing farm/ranch stress at <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/farmranchstress>
- **Access valuable tools and resources online through the North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Center**, with resources from 12 states at <https://farmstress.org/>
- **Access resources at the Farm Crisis Center online**, sponsored by Farm Aid and National Farmers Union: <https://nfu.org/farmstress/>
- **Live Your Life Well Campaign, Mental Health America** — www.mentalhealthamerica.net/live-your-life-well
- **Farms.com – Val Farmer, “Mind Over Matter” video series** (10 short videos) — www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL89017F264C488BC5

Mental and Emotional Health Resources

- **Call a state helpline** — Most states have a toll-free, 24-hour helpline for health and human services information and referral. In North Dakota, call 2-1-1.
- **Refer to a local health-care provider or mental health professional** — If you or someone you know needs help, contact and connect with a local professional such as a clergy member, medical professional, law enforcement, school counselor or social worker.
Link: <https://odphp.health.gov/myhealthfinder/>
- **SAMHSA, Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator** — Online confidential system for locating support or treatment resources in your area.
Call 1-800-662-HELP (4357) or link: <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>
- **Psychology Help Center, American Psychological Association** — Online resource center providing information on daily physical and emotional well-being.
Link: www.apa.org/helpcenter/
- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (available 24/7)** — Call or text 9-8-8 or chat live at 988lifeline.org.

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