

After the Emergency

Points to Consider²³

- Certain people react strongly at the time stressful events happen while others react later, after a few days or even weeks.
- Some people experience physical symptoms such as headaches, back pain, stomach pain or upset, diarrhea, problems sleeping, low energy, or changes in appetite.
- Emotional symptoms include anger, sadness, anxiety about the future, and feelings of helplessness or guilt.
- It may be difficult to concentrate or stop thinking about the stressful event.
- Coping may be more difficult for seniors suffering from depression, thinking and memory problems, those living alone or those with few social contacts.
- Talk to children about the incident and encourage them to share their concerns. Tell the child about your plans each day and don't leave them in a new place without other family members.
- On farm operations, stress and mental illness may result in decreased care of livestock and a noticeable reduction in regular farm maintenance activities.

Common effects of stress on your body²⁴

- headache
- muscle tension or pain
- chest pain
- fatigue
- change in sex drive
- stomach upset
- sleep problems

Common effects of stress on your mood

- anxiety
- restlessness
- lack of motivation or focus
- feeling overwhelmed
- irritability or anger
- sadness or depression

Common effects of stress on your behavior

- overeating or undereating
- angry outbursts
- drug or alcohol abuse
- tobacco use
- social withdrawal
- exercising less often



23. Taken from *After the Emergency*, Alberta Emergency Management Agency, April 2016, open.alberta.ca/dataset/841bd9af-2f8d-477d-b9d1-3532a634a454/resource/cdb6ba5e-082b-4931-adf2-ae177a7847d3/download/ma-after-an-emergency-fact-sheet.pdf

24. Mayo Clinic [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org)



Coping strategies:

- Take time to talk with family members and employees about the events. Recognize that they may be concerned about the future of the farming operation.
- Review with family members and employees the signs of stress (as noted above). Encourage them to come to you or seek out support if they recognize these symptoms in themselves or in you.
- Take part in information meetings about the event(s) however also take breaks from the media reports and from thinking and talking about the events.
- Be cautious about making major decisions if you are very upset.
- Try to get back to your daily routine.
- Be physically active and do something you enjoy.
- Visit with friends and relatives.
- Get lots of sleep, eat healthy and on a regular schedule.

When to seek help:

- can't return to a normal routine;
- feeling extremely helpless;
- having thoughts of hurting self or others;
- using alcohol and drugs excessively; or
- stopped doing things you enjoy.

You may want to start with a visit to your medical doctor or consider seeing a professional counsellor or therapist (including your faith leader), who can help you identify and talk through the sources of your stress and learn new coping tools.

**Additional sources of information**

- Canadian Mental Health Association cmha.ca/get-involved/find-your-cmha/
- Children's Mental Health Ontario cmho.org/
- ConnexOntario, Health Services Information 1-866-531-2600 connexontario.ca/
- Farmer Wellness Initiative 1-866-267-6255 farmerwellnessinitiative.ca
- Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868 kidshelpphone.ca/
- Ontario Mental Health Services ontario.ca/page/mental-health-services
ontario.ca/page/find-mental-health-support
- Mayo Clinic mayoclinic.org
- Mental Health Services for Children, Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/english/specialneeds/mentalhealth/index.aspx
- The American Institute of Stress stress.org/stress-effects/

For resources in your specific area, search "Mental Health Services and Counselling Centres" in your phone directory or online at canada411.yellowpages.ca/.

See Section 7: Mental Health Information and Resources for more information

Identifying and Managing Stress, Anxiety and Depression: Mental Health Information and Resources

Stress is all around us — family, relationships, work, financial, health (human and animal) — and it can sometimes become very overwhelming, taking a toll on our mental wellbeing.

With busy and demanding lives and jobs, it can be difficult to find the time to take care of ourselves. That is why it is so important for family, friends and neighbours to look out for one another.

Remember that you are not alone — reach out to a family member, or a friend, or other emotional support. Just talking with someone can make a world of difference.

There are also confidential resources — available 24/7 — that you can and should contact if you, or someone you know, is in need of assistance. **Contact information is found under “Resources.”**

GOT 5 MINUTES? MAKE TIME FOR YOU!

1. Take a quick walk, stretch, grab a cup of coffee or a snack or text a friend to check-in.
2. Breathe deeply and focus on something that is positive and makes you happy.
3. Prioritize: Write down what you need to complete and when. What tasks need to be done and what can wait? Give thought as to who you can contact for specific issues, e.g. speak with your financial advisor or bank regarding financial concerns. What can you ask someone else to do? Delegating is good. Saying “no” or “not now” is also ok!
4. Be mindful of your diet and your food and beverage choices.
5. Share your feelings — talking to someone can make a big difference.

WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is the body’s response to a real or perceived threat. Some stress can be a good thing. It can motivate us to focus on a task or take action and solve a problem. In this situation, stress is manageable and even helpful. Stress becomes a problem when we are not sure how to handle an event or a situation. Then worry sets in, and we feel “stressed.”

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Depression is a mental health condition that affects a person’s mood — the way a person feels. Mood impacts the way people think about themselves, relate to others, and interact with the world around them. This is more than a ‘bad day’ or ‘feeling blue.’

Signs of **depression** include:

- Feeling sad, worthless, hopeless, guilty or anxious a lot of the time
- Feeling irritable or angry; this may include losing interest in things that you used to enjoy and may also include withdrawing from others
- Difficulty concentrating, focusing on tasks and remembering information; it can be hard to concentrate, learn new things or make decisions
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits and impacts to one’s physical health

WHAT IS ANXIETY DISORDER?

Everyone feels anxious at times. Workplace pressures or demanding schedules or health issues can lead to worry, even fear. However, people suffering from an anxiety disorder have intense, prolonged feelings of fright and distress for no obvious reason, and these feelings can seriously impact feelings, thinking and actions.

(Sources: Canadian Mental Health Association and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs)





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How are you feeling?

While everyone experiences some level of stress, anxiety and/or depression in their lives, being able to identify and lessen stress is important to one's overall wellbeing and in helping to ensure that everyday stress does not escalate to something more serious.

The following dashboard uses colours — green, yellow, orange and red — to help you measure your stress level, as well as provides some coping strategies. For example, under Orange, moderate insomnia and a constant focus on problems and anger, can lead to injury and/or burnout. On any given day, depending on your circumstances, your stress level may escalate; it is important to know when you need help, or if you feel someone around you needs help, and act upon it.

| My dashboard | | Balance is extremely important when dealing with stress. When you look at your internal dashboard, do you see all green lights? Are there any red lights tipping you toward overload and stress? Let's all take care of ourselves so we can continue to do what we enjoy most. | | |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| By Dr. Georges Sabongui © 2018 | | | | |
| | Green Healthy Optimal | Yellow Reacting Stress | Orange Injured Burnout | Red Illness Depression Mental illness |
|  Physical | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good sleep Good appetite, want to eat healthy Want to take care of physical health Rarely or never sick | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mild insomnia Tired Attracted to junk food often Unmotivated to exercise Trouble relaxing without a drink | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate insomnia Exhausted Binge eating Drinking too much alcohol or using drugs to relax Various aches and pains | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constantly sleeping or periods of no sleep at all Constant aching in body Immune compromised: always sick Trouble getting off the couch or getting out of bed Only moments of relief come from excessive drinking or drugs, or over-the-counter medication |
|  Mental | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentally clear Focused Good concentration Creative problem-solving Sees solutions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easily distracted Excessive worry Procrastination Avoidance Sees obstacles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chronically preoccupied Inability to concentrate Impaired decision-making Memory loss Constant focus on problems Always negative | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impaired judgment Paralyzed decision-making *Suicidal thoughts or actions <i>*If you're having suicidal thoughts, seek help immediately and call 911.</i> |
|  Emotional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivated Excited Good social network | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Irritability Loss of sense of humour Discouraged Impulsive Seeing people is a chore | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anger Anxiety Low mood Overwhelmed Avoiding social situations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apathy Hopelessness or helplessness Out of control: explosive-impulsive, holding it all in Feeling like a burden Isolating yourself from friends, family, and your community |
|  Strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self care: physical, mental and emotional Serotonin boost Take a work break or vacation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reaching out to friends and family Doing something to relax Seeing your family doctor | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer support, assistance programs, mental health first aid | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional or clinical support: doctor, psychologist |

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If you feel that you are a threat to yourself, or others, call 911 immediately, or go to your closest emergency department or hospital

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I'm here to listen and help

Do you know someone who is going through a challenging time? Have you noticed differences in their behavior, attitude or appearance, or a difference in the condition of their farm or animals? Do you struggle with how to speak with them? How do you begin? What do you say?

Start simple – “How are you?” or “How are things at the farm?” are basic questions to ask to begin a conversation. From there, you can continue the conversation by asking questions specific to what the speaker is saying.

Try to actively listen and respond accordingly – Listen and pay attention to what the speaker is saying. Give your full attention to the speaker so that the speaker knows and feels that what they are saying is important and that you are genuinely concerned and interested in their wellbeing. Be patient, give the speaker time to gather their thoughts, and provide gentle encouragement to the speaker to reveal additional thoughts and feelings.

Offer to help – Acknowledge that the speaker is dealing with a lot and ask what you can do to help or support them. If you know of someone in a similar situation, you can offer suggestions on what that person is doing. If you have expertise in a specific area, you can offer to work together with the speaker.

Support system – Ask the speaker if they have a support system and someone they can talk to, be it their family, a friend or a neighbour. If not, encourage them to open up to someone they feel comfortable with, or to contact a mental health resource (found at the end of this chapter under **Resources**).

The hardest and most important question to ask:

Do they have thoughts of causing harm to themselves or others? Are they feeling suicidal?

If yes, contact 911 and stay with the person until assistance arrives. **Do not leave the person on their own.**

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Resources

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24/7 crisis hotline

ConnexOntario (connexontario.ca/) is a service of the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care that provides mental health, addiction and problem gambling navigation and information services, 24/7 - 365 days/year.

- Phone: (toll free) 1-866-531-2600 – available 24/7 - 365 days/year
- Email and webchat options are also available by going to the website connexontario.ca/
 - o Note: the webchat option is not a crisis line and may take longer to receive a response
- You can also download the ConnexGo app from the Apple App Store or Google Play

Crisis text number – available 24/7

- Text (686868) – for youth and adults (sponsored by Kids Help Phone)

Canadian Mental Health Association (Ontario)

- Toll-free: 1-800-463-2338, staffed 24/7

Farmer Wellness Initiative

- farmerwellnessinitiative.ca
- 1-866-267-6255

Kids Help Phone

- Call: 1-800-668-6868 (provides counselling and info for ages 5-20)
- Live web chat
- Text (686868) – this is for youth and adults (sponsored by Kids Help Phone)

Mental Health Kit for Farmers

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) has developed a ontario.ca/page/mental-health-resources-for-farmers to assist farmers in dealing with the stresses of owning a farm business and to improve their well-being.

Mental health resources and contact information, as well as resources to assist farmers in reducing and coping with stress, financial stress and animal welfare stress, are provided.

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