







Why Use "Behavioral" Instead of "Mental"

- ▶ More comprehensive and holistic: Includes addictions treatments, psychiatric care, psychological services, and any interventions that impact our behavior
- ▶ The term "mental health care" necessitates medications or psychotherapy, whereas "behavioral health" is understandable and makes us responsible for our thoughts and actions
- ▶ We are in charge of most of our behavior and can manage ourselves
- ▶ The preferred term of most US government agencies

Produced by Michael R. Rosmann, Ph.D., June, 2016

The Agrarian Imperative

Like many animal species, humans have a basic need to acquire sufficient territory and the necessary resources (e.g., capital, equipment, buildings, livestock) to produce the food and shelter required by their families and communities. Also called "the agrarian personality", this genetically programmed instinct drives farmers to hang onto their land at all costs. The agrarian imperative instills farmers to work incredibly hard, to endure unusual pain and hardship and to take uncommon risks.

*Rosmann, M.R. (2010). The Agrarian Imperative. *Journal of Agromedicine*, 15(2), 71-75.

Produced by Michael R. Rosmann, Ph.D., June, 2016

The Most Common Diagnosed Behavioral Health Conditions of Distressed Farm People

- ▶ Relationship problems, such as partner and marital problems, domestic and child abuse, quarreling with elders, blame and anger are usually the first symptoms, about 40% of diagnoses*
- ▶ Adjustment problems, which are temporary exacerbations of anxiety, depression and other behavior problems that remit when stress diminishes, about 24% of diagnoses*
- ▶ Anxiety disorders, including excessive worry, panic, PTSD, 11% of diagnoses*

*Rosmann and Delworth, 1993; Rosmann and Stucker, 2008. Some people had more than one diagnosis.

Behavioral Health Problems of the Agricultural Population, cont.

- ▶ Forms of depression, with major depression more common than bipolar disorder, 18-33% of diagnoses*
- ▶ Substance misuse, either alcohol, street drugs or prescribed medications, 7%, but often co-occurs about 40% of the time with other diagnoses
- ▶ Personality disorders are uncommon in the agricultural population, about 1.5%
- ▶ Psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia are rare, <1% of the agricultural population

* Rosmann and Delworth, 1993; Rosmann and Stuckler, 2008.

Contributors to Farm Stress

- ▶ The most important stressors are those we can't control and which threaten the loss of our farming operations.
- ▶ Often the stress results from financial threats to the operation, but may be due to unpredictable events like bad weather, disease outbreaks, personal health issues, market shifts and other factors beyond our personal control
- ▶ Most people can handle two stressors simultaneously, but three is usually beyond their capacity

Danger Signals of Excessive Stress, Depression and Suicide

- ▶ Verbalizations about hopelessness (e.g., "It's no use, I feel like giving up, What's the use in trying.")
- ▶ Verbalizations and loss of interest or pleasure in doing things that usually are fun, such as "I haven't laughed in a long time."
- ▶ Clear statements, like "I feel like letting all my cows go"
- ▶ "Lump in the throat phenomenon" when the person says "I wish I could cry but I can't"

Danger Signals cont.

- ▶ Avoiding public events such as church or kids' sports activities and meetings that he/she usually attends
- ▶ Flat affect, retreating behaviors and isolation
- ▶ Deterioration in appearance or health of livestock, the farm, pastures overstocked, machinery and farm facilities unpainted and in disrepair
- ▶ Decline in personal appearance from the usual
- ▶ When exposure to farm chemicals could have occurred, such as during spring planting or applying parasiticides

What We Can Do to Help Distressed Farmers

- ▶ Visit them and offer help
- ▶ Don't leave them alone if they appear suicidal, but instead contact family members or others who are around to share concerns
- ▶ Provide options for addressing their concerns, such as outside consultants (e.g., farm business expertise), behavioral health resources (e.g., Hotlines for farmers, community meetings, educational programs) and behavioral health resources (e.g., the best local counselors who understand agriculture)

Managing Our Behavior

- ▶ Behavior, like a feed ration, has ingredients that can be varied to maximize our well-being.
- ▶ Just as animals need an ideal ration to grow the fastest or to produce the most milk, we humans can manage our behavioral well-being: Our daily and weekly behavior rations include how much and how hard we work, sleep, recreate, pray, laugh, talk and engage in stress management

How to Get A++++ in Developing Agricultural Behavioral Healthcare

- ▶ Acceptable (culturally attuned) services suited to client needs and delivered by providers who understand agriculture
- ▶ Accessible and available when needed, which includes 24/7 emergency calls and emails
- ▶ Affordable without filing insurance claims
- ▶ In languages and delivered by persons familiar with the backgrounds of those being served

For Farmers, Credibility is Key

- ▶ The providers must know something about agriculture and be familiar with the work of those they are serving
- ▶ The providers must coach and educate the clients rather than to cure their maladjustments—the curing part is up to the clients
- ▶ It's beneficial to see them at their homes or in neutral settings, with sessions varying from a brief check-in to several hours in length
- ▶ Telehealth can assist

Ag Behavioral Health Services That Are Best Practices

- ▶ Telephone and email hotlines/helplines
- ▶ Follow-up counseling that is A++++
- ▶ Capacity to refer for ancillary assistance such as legal, medical, emergency, mediation, subinss consultation and other services
- ▶ Community workshops provide education and emotional support
- ▶ Promote the services through the FSA, on radio, in newspapers, and through agencies
- ▶ Evaluate and modify the services as needed

Specific Behaviors that Help Us Deal with Stress

- ▶ Talking with people who understand our/their dilemma
- ▶ Physical intimacy and comforting touches, such as stroking arms and hands
- ▶ Recreation and breaks away from the stressful environment
- ▶ Prayer and meditation, in the outdoors or any other comforting environment
- ▶ Interacting positively with pets and beloved animals

Remember That Someone Else Always Has It Worse Than We Do

- ▶ Our distress will diminish when we take charge of it, more than anything else
- ▶ Most problems are resolvable, but succumbing to them by suicide or giving up in other ways are permanent solutions to problems that are usually temporary
- ▶ Anxiety, depression, family issues and most behavioral health problems are resolvable
- ▶ The current attention in the national media to suicide require that we farmers make getting help and prevention of unnecessary deaths a priority

Additional Information about Behavioral Health Issues in the Farming Community

- ▶ Literature about agricultural behavioral health, resources for healthcare, social, legal, family and many other farming and ranching topics are available from a website maintained by Iowa Farmer Today can be accessed easily by conducting an online search with the words: Farm and Ranch Life Rosmann, or contact the author at: mike@agbehavioralhealth.com or via the website: www.agbehavioralhealth.com.
- ▶ Local Extension offices and farm associations

Further Resources

- ▶ Iowa Concern Hotline 1-800-447-1985
- ▶ Minnesota Farm and Rural Helpline 1-833-600-2670
- ▶ Nebraska Rural Response Helpline 1-800-464-0258
- ▶ NYFarmNet 1-800-547-3276
- ▶ Vermont Farm First 1-877-493-6216
- ▶ Wisconsin Farm Center 1-800-942-2474
- ▶ Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network is in the next Farm Bill
- ▶ National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255


