



Donna Shanklin
Regional Extension Agent
News Release

How to Recognize and Manage Depression

Personal stress is part of being an agricultural producer, and over the years, most producers feel they are managing okay. But are they?

Because many agriculture producers are men recognizing the symptoms of depression may be difficult. According to Randy Weigel, Extension specialist at the University of Wyoming, a change in behavior can be a good indicator of stress or depression.

In his publication, "The Personal Nature of Agriculture: Men and Depression" (found at <http://ces.uwyo.edu/PUBS/B1104.pdf>) he lists the following as symptoms of depression:

- Sadness,
- activities that once gave pleasure or were of a great interest are no longer important,
- change in appetite or weight, either not eating, or binge eating, weight loss to weight gain,
- problems sleeping or sleeping too much,
- physical slowing or agitation,
- energy loss,
- trouble thinking or concentrating on a task,
- withdrawing from family and friends,
- abuse alcohol or drugs,
- display emotional outbursts,
- eat or work excessively.

If you recognize any of these symptoms in yourself or a loved one, be aware that these are symptoms of a variety of health issues and depression may not be the issue. The key is to talk and to listen. If you are on the receiving end of someone telling you that you are acting depressed, listen and realize they are doing it out of a sense of caring. If you are the person telling someone you believe they are depressed and they need to seek help with a doctor, be advised they may not hear your words. Try to be supportive but not overprotective. A combination of antidepressant medication and counseling has been shown to be the most effective in combating depression.

An improved diet and exercise has also been found to play a role in easing depression.

Having depression may be difficult to admit to yourself or about a loved one, but successful treatments are available. 'Putting on a happy face' and 'putting up with it' aren't positive ways to deal with a very serious issue.

Resources Used: University of Maine, Cooperative Extension, Helping Farmers Cope with Stress <http://www.extension.umaine.edu/FarmersUnderStress/>

University of Wyoming, Cooperative Extension, The Personal Nature of Agriculture: Men and Depression <http://ces.uwyo.edu/PUBS/B1104.pdf>

Web Md: Depression slide show: Tips for Exercise, Diet and Stress Reduction, <http://www.webmd.com/depression/depression-diet-stress-exercise-slideshow>

For more information please contact Donna R. Shanklin, Regional Extension Agent-Health, Human Nutrition, Diet and Health at the St. Clair County Extension Office at 205 338-9416 or e-mail at drs0009@aces.edu.