



NY FARMNET

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Mind Yourself

Managing Stress in Uncertain Times

KATE DOWNES | 08.31.2021



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Objectives

Why talk about stress?
Identifying stress
Let's talk about stress
Stress management
Resources

Why should we
talk about
stress and
mental health?

Impacts of COVID-19 on Rural Mental Health



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75% of rural adults say mental health is very important, a 6% increase from April 2019.

.....

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87% of farmers/farmworkers say it's important to reduce stigma about mental health in agriculture community.

.....

.....

66% of farmers/farmworkers say the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted their mental health, while 53% of rural adults say the pandemic has impacted their mental health some. *Younger rural adults are more likely than older rural adults to say the pandemic has impacted their mental health a lot.

Impacts of COVID-19 on Rural Mental Health



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Farmers/farmworkers are 10% more likely than rural adults to have experienced feeling nervous, anxious or on edge during the pandemic (65% vs 55%).

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The percentage of farmers/farmworkers who think social isolation impacts farmers' mental health increased by 22% since April 2019.

.....

Farmers/farmworkers are 7% more likely than rural adults to say stress and mental health have become more of a problem in their community in the past year.

.....

56% of rural adults and 58% of farmers/farmworkers are personally experience more mental health challenges than they were a year ago.

The majority of rural adults agree that **cost** (73%), **availability** (63%), **accessibility** (63%), **stigma** (60%), and **embarrassment** (59%) would be barriers if they were seeking help for a mental health condition.

American Farm Bureau Federation + Morning Consult, 2020

What is stress?

A need or demand people confront, that is perceived as burdensome or threatening, and can lead to physical or mental health problems.

(Peralin 1989, Thoits 2010, Dimsdale 2008, Chen & Miller 2007, Keller et al. 2012)

Feeling troubled or threatened by life.

(World Health Organization)

It's how the brain and body respond to a demand.





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Some stress is good.

fear of the unknown	COVID-19	feeling of loss	failure	lack of social support
weather	debt	family	continuing the legacy	health insurance
not getting paid	sending the kids back to school	the state of the world	commodity prices	stigma
farms going out of business	crop yields	changing regulations	isolation	work

When stress builds up, it can lead to getting trapped by those thoughts and feelings.

Signs + symptoms of **stress**

Physical

- headaches
- stomach issues
- back pain
- heavy/tight chest
- muscle tension
- neck + shoulder pain
- rashes
- rapid heartbeat

Behavioral

- increased substance use
- verbal/physical abuse
- unable to focus
- communication problems
- trouble sleeping
- feel tired
- cannot sit still
- feel sad or guilty
- worry

Emotional

- impatience
- frustration
- depression
- anxious/on edge
- difficulty controlling emotions

Moving through the stress cycle

How to feel those feelings and process them.

Emotions are an involuntary neurological response. They have a beginning, a middle, and an end. - Emily Nagoski

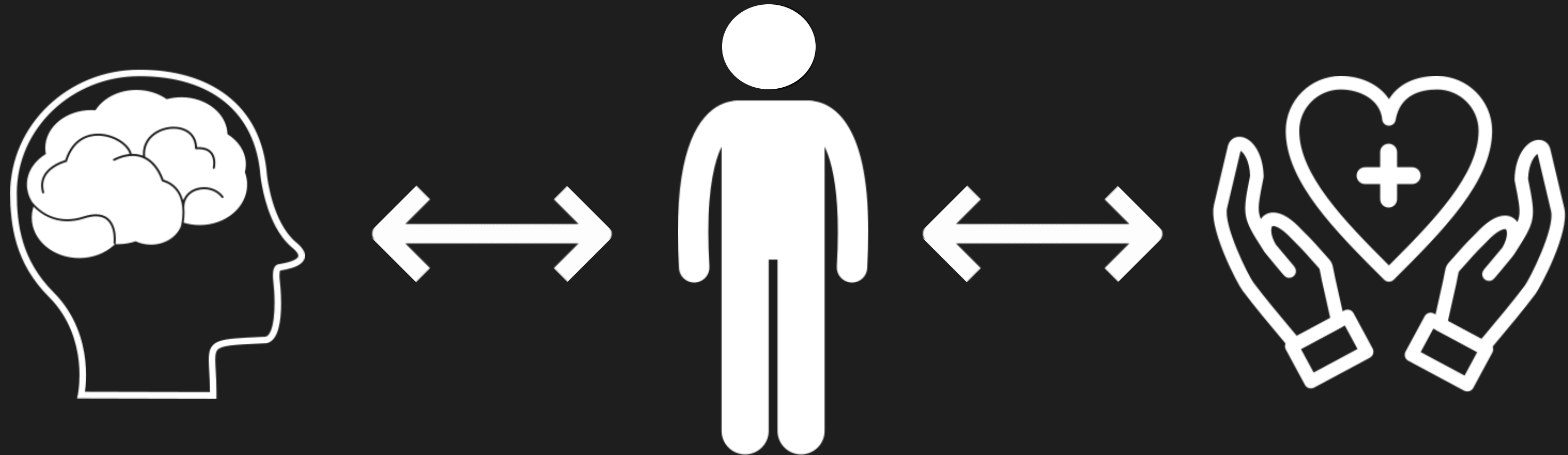
Remove the stressors, right?

Wrong.

Removing the stressors helps, and is part of the process, but doesn't mean the stress cycle is complete.

To complete the cycle, physical activity/movement is needed.







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If you are **struggling**,
you are not alone.

The connection
between chronic
stress and suicide.



How do we talk about stress and **mental health**?

Language matters.

When talking about suicide use phrases such as:

- died by suicide
- suicided
- took their own life
- killed themselves

Signs + symptoms of chronic, prolonged stress

- Change in routine
- Increase in illness
- Increase in accidents
- Appearance changes
- Children show signs of stress
- Excessive sleep or insomnia
- Brain fog

Risk factors for suicide

- Mental health disorders, particularly mood disorders, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, and certain personality disorders.
- Family history of suicide
- Substance use disorder
- Intoxication
 - More than 1 in 3 people who died by suicide were under the influence of alcohol at the time of death.
- Hopelessness
- Previous suicide attempts
- Access to firearms
- A serious chronic illness
- Gender - women are more likely to attempt suicide, men are 3.5x more likely to die by suicide.
- A history of trauma or abuse
- Prolonged stress
- A recent tragedy or loss
- Job or financial loss
- Loss of relationship (death, divorce)
- Lack of social support or a sense of isolation
- Exposure to others who have died by suicide (in real life or via the media)

Suicide in the US

- Suicide is the **10th leading cause of death** in the US
- In 2019, **47,511 Americans** died by suicide
- In 2019, there were an estimated **1.38 million suicide attempts**
- The rate of suicide is highest in **middle-aged white men**.
- In 2019, **men died by suicide 3.63x** as often as women.
- On average, there are **130 suicides per day**.
- **White males** accounted for **69.38% of suicide deaths** in 2019.
- In 2019, **firearms accounted for 50.39%** of all suicide deaths.

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention www.afsp.org

Suicide Data: **New York**



Suicide is a public health problem and leading cause of death in the United States. Suicide can also be prevented – more investment in suicide prevention, education, and research will prevent the untimely deaths of thousands of Americans each year. Unless otherwise noted, this fact sheet reports 2019 data from the CDC, the most current verified data available at time of publication (January 2021).

12th leading cause of death in New York

2nd leading

cause of death for ages 10-34

4th leading

cause of death for ages 35-54

9th leading

cause of death for ages 55-64

18th leading

cause of death for ages 65 & older

Suicide Death Rates

	Number of Deaths by Suicide	Rate per 100,000 Population	State Rank
New York	1,705	8.26	49
Nationally	47,511	13.93	

See full list of citations at afsp.org/statistics.

79.4% of communities did not have enough mental health providers to serve residents in 2020, according to federal guidelines.

Over six times as many people died by suicide in 2019 than in alcohol related motor vehicle accidents.

The total deaths to suicide reflected a total of 33,782 years of potential life lost (YPLL) before age 65.

56.59% of firearm deaths were suicides.

26.69% of all suicides were by firearms.

Demographics

United States

- 2.04 million farms
- Average age is 57
- 2.7 million farmers are 45+
- 2.1 million producers are male
- 1.2 million are female
- 3.2 million producers are white

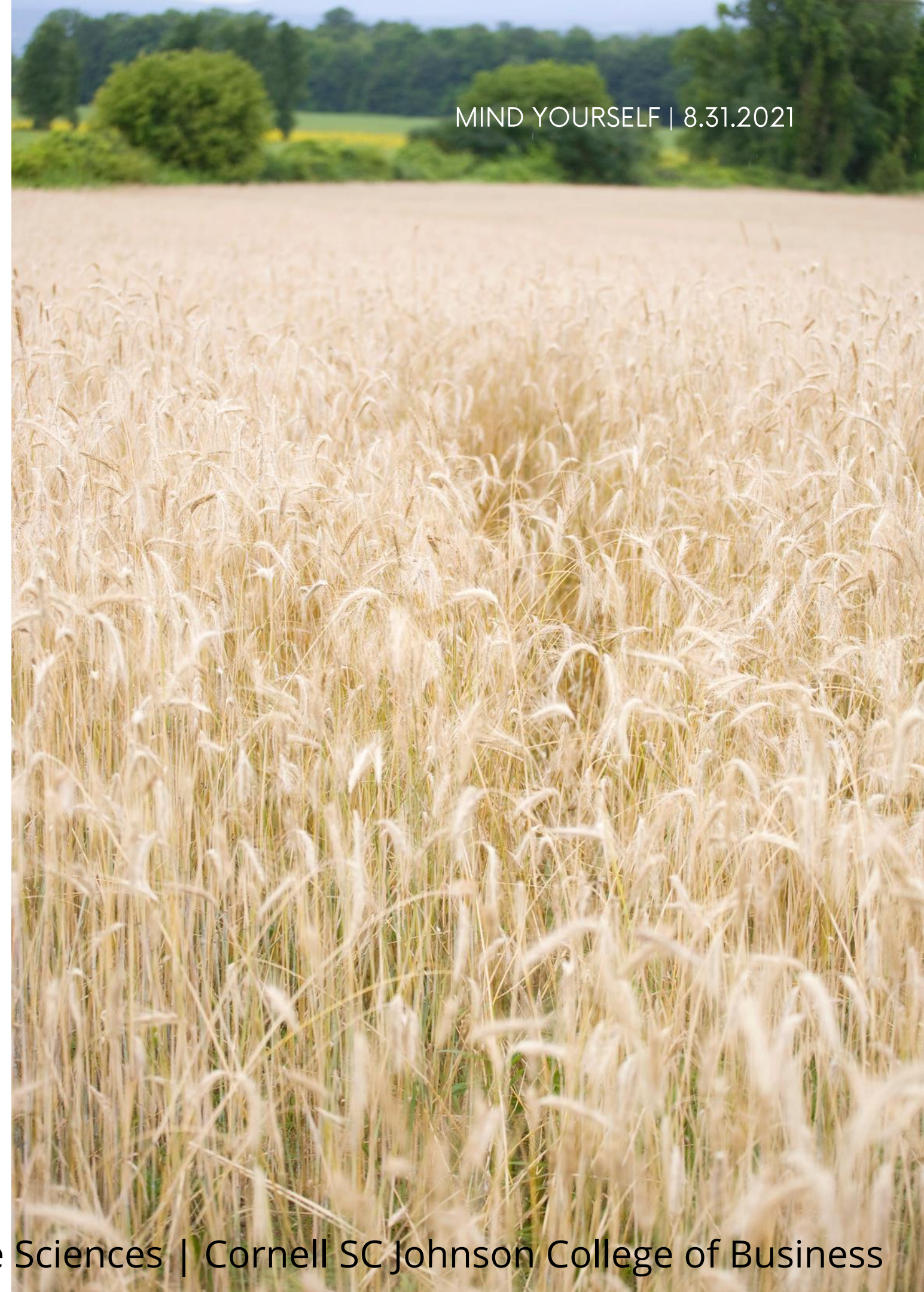
New York State

- 33,400 farms in operation
- Average age is 55
- 39,537 are 45+
- 35,985 producers are male
- 21,880 producers are female
- 57,155 are white

(USDA-NASS, 2017)

Suicide Warning Signs

- Talking or writing about suicide or death
- Feeling hopeless, trapped, or like a burden
- Giving away prized possessions
- Making a plan, acquiring means
- Saying goodbyes
- Isolation from others
- Loss of interest
- Mood change
- Acting recklessly
- Increased substance use
- Sleep changes
- Being anxious or agitated



How do you ask someone about suicide?

Ask them directly if they are thinking of suicide.

Are you thinking of killing yourself?
Are you having thoughts of suicide?

- Asking directly does NOT increase risk of suicide, in fact it can provide relief to that person that someone sees their struggle.
- If it's not a definitive NO, it may mean yes.

Asking about suicide

- Use I statements, to present the facts about what you have noticed.
- Ask questions, but don't push.
- Remember this is about that person, **not** you.
 - Their experiences are not the same as yours
 - Their perspective is not the same as yours
 - Their culture is not the same as yours
 - They may use language you find uncomfortable.

Ask simple,
open-ended
questions,
without
judgement.

Be mindful of your body language.

.....

Be mindful of your tone.

.....

Be mindful of your words.

Talk to them without judgement or blame,
despite your own beliefs.

.....

Listen.

What if they say yes?

- Take them seriously.
- Ask if they have a plan, means.
 - The more details they more serious the situation.
- Don't leave them alone.
- Ask the person what has been helpful in the past when they've been in this situation?
- Call for help.
- Call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.**
- Text **GOT5 to 741-741** to text with a trained crisis counselor at the Crisis Text Line
- Call 911

Reassure them and share information

DO

- Be realistic with your expectations
- Offer consistent emotional support
- Give the person hope
- Provide practical help
- Share information
- Know your limits of what you can and cannot do.
- Encourage professional help.

DON'T

- Make promises
- Give advice
- Dismiss the problem or emotion
- Focus on right vs wrong
- Debate them
- Try to fix the problem yourself
- Engage in sarcastic, patronizing, or hostile communication



Be a good human.

Show empathy.



Managing stress

Coping strategies

- Recognize and acknowledge your feelings
 - **It's ok to not be ok.**
- Be kind to yourself
- Breathe
- Connect with people in your social network
- Practice self care
- Go outside
- Limit your media exposure + manage your information flow
- Remind yourself of your strengths and values

- 1 Positive self talk
- 2 Talk it out
- 3 Acceptance
- 4 Focus on the present moment
- 5 Breathe
- 6 Remind yourself of your strengths and values
- 7 Move your body
- 8 Do what you love
- 9 Set boundaries
- 10 Clean up your sleep hygiene.

If you don't know what to do, speak with a healthcare provider/professional.

Encourage Professional Help

- Doctors (pediatricians/primary care physicians/psychiatrists)
- Nurse practitioners/physician assistants
- Mental health professionals (social workers, licensed counselors)
- Drug or alcohol specialists
- School counselors
- Certified peer specialists
- Clergy

What if the person or family doesn't want help?

Find out why

- Address the fear of embarrassment or shame
- Help find solutions to concerns about paying for care or finding a provider

Engage professional intervention if it's an emergency

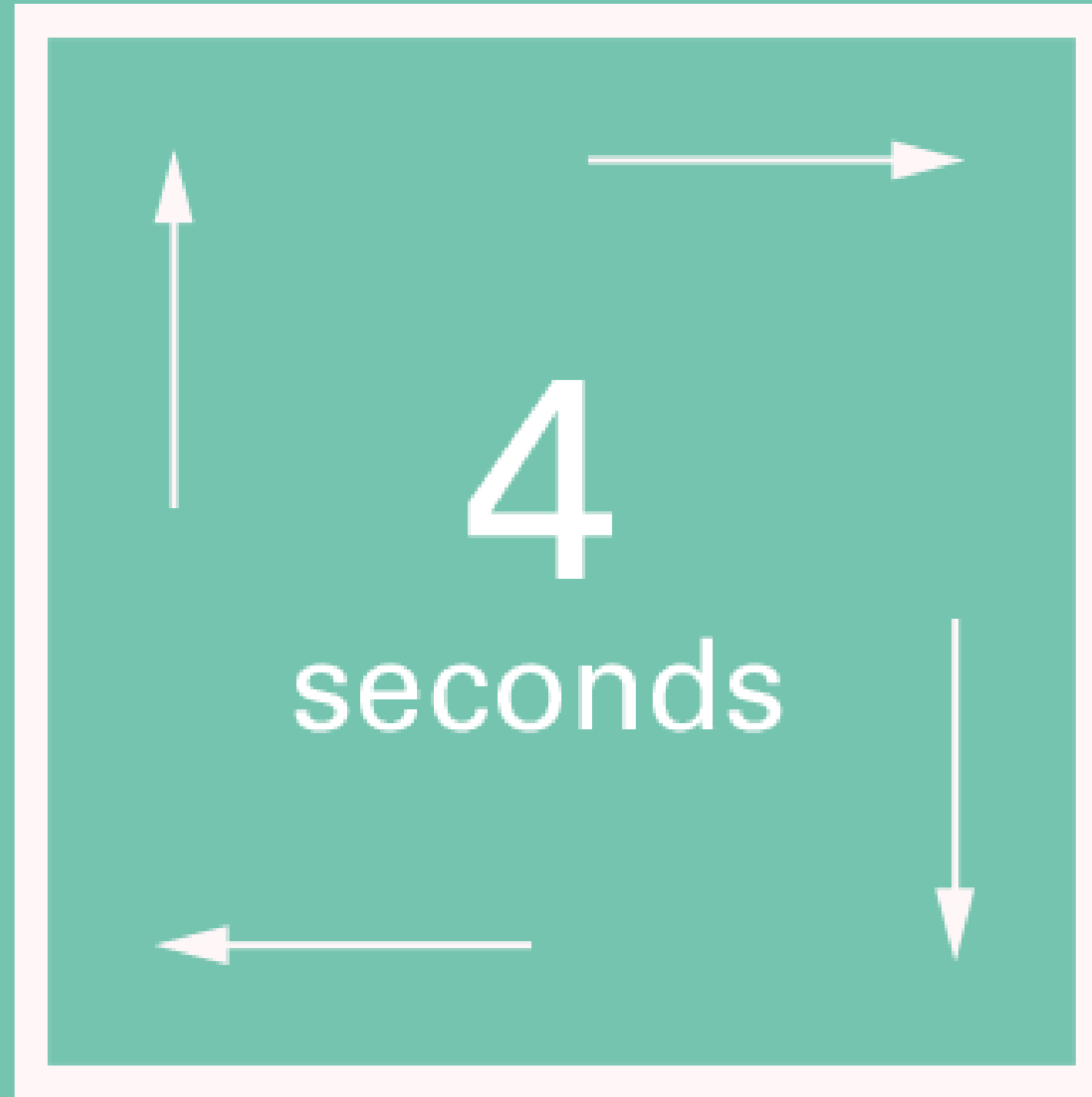
- Call 911
- Call Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255/988



Give hope.

Breathe In

Hold



Hold

Breathe Out

Recap

- Talking openly and honestly about stress and your struggles helps reduce stigma
- It's ok to not be ok.
- Stress can build up and lead to health problems and can lead to increased risk for suicide.
- Suicide can be prevented.
- Mental health is physical health
- It is best to ask someone directly if you are concerned about their well-being.
- Stress can be managed.
- Be a good human.

Referring farmers or service providers to NY FarmNet

- If you notice someone needs help, ask them
- Listen to and acknowledge what the person is saying.
- Introduce NY FarmNet as a completely free and confidential service.
- Leave printed NY FarmNet materials with them.
- Encourage them to call 1-800-547-3276 or fill out the online contact form at www.nyfarmnet.org



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Resources

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
- Veterans Crisis line: 1-800-273-8255 Press 1
- Crisis Text Line: Text GOT5 to 741-741
- NY FarmNet (NY only): 1-800-547-3276 or www.nyfarmnet.org
- Farm Aid 1-800-327-6243
- LGBTQ National Help Center 1-888-843-4564
- Vermont Farm First 1-877-493-6216