

## Managing stress at work

### Purpose:

To promote good mental wellbeing in the workplace and for workers to know when and how to seek support to help reduce stress.

### Why:

To reduce the risk of poor mental health, which in turn can lead to poor concentration, risk of injury, accidents, and staff absences.

### TIAH Capability Framework area:

This aligns with the knowledge and skills in the Health and Safety area.

<https://tiah.org/tiah-capability-framework>

### Talk leader instructions:

- Prepare to do the talk in a suitable/quiet location with no distractions
- Consider using some of the resources as part of the talk, e.g. showing a video
- Engage with participants, ask questions and give everyday examples
- Conclude with a brief review
- Get everyone to sign the form. Make sure to write the name of the farm and the date. Keep a copy in your Health and Safety records
- Ensure all participants have access to a copy of this document to refer to once the session has finished. This could be electronic and emailed or printed

### Notes:

## Background

Work-related stress and mental health problems often go together. People can experience work-related stress without having anxiety, depression, or other mental health problems. They can also have anxiety and depression without experiencing stress.

Stress is a reaction to something in someone's life, whether in your personal life, such as a bereavement or divorce, or at work, such as an increase in responsibilities or workload. It can also be a combination of both and can aggravate existing conditions, such as anxiety and depression. The good news is that you can take action to remove or reduce stressors, and there are little things you can do to help yourself and find out what works for you.

## Main learning points



The first step in managing stress is recognising the signs. You may notice that you:

- feel negative
- are indecisive
- feel isolated
- feel nervous
- unable to concentrate

You may also notice that you are having difficulty sleeping, eating more or less than usual, or smoking, drinking, or taking drugs to help you cope.



Many workers are reluctant to talk about stress at work, but it can happen to anyone. Remember: It's not a weakness.

If you notice any of the above signs, it's important to talk to someone **as soon as possible** to help prevent the situation from getting worse, and talking to someone outside of the situation may help you to find a solution to the problem.

Your employer has a legal duty to assess the risks to your health at work and share the results of a risk assessment with you. Employers can find out more about this on the HSE website <https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/risk-assessment.htm>

If you don't feel comfortable talking to your employer, you could try talking to a manager, supervisor, or your HR department (if applicable), or tell a colleague how you're feeling.

There are also many places where you can go to for confidential help and support on stress and other mental health issues, including:

**FarmWell:** Call their helpline on 03000 111 999 or email their helpline on [helpafcn.org.uk](mailto:helpafcn.org.uk)

**The DPJ Foundation:** Supporting those in agriculture with poor mental health. Call the 'Share the Load' helpline: 0800 587 4262

**RABI:** Helping farming people. Call 0800 188 4444

**Samaritans:** 24-hour listening and text support. Call free on 116 123

Notes:

**Papyrus Hopeline:** 24-hour support for young people (under 35) in crisis. Call 0800 068 4141

**CALM** (Campaign Against Living Miserably): For anyone in the UK who's feeling down or has hit a wall for any reason. Call 0800 58 58 58 (5pm to midnight)

If you (or someone you know) need help urgently – for example, if you have harmed yourself - call 999. A mental health emergency should be taken as seriously as a medical emergency.

**Optional:** Watch this YouTube video 'The problem of mental health for young farmers' (2 minutes) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpYSve1KH3o>

***"It's not weak to speak".***

Farmworker Michael talks about the importance of talking about mental health in farming in the above video.

Discussion points



Choose one or two of the following discussion points that you feel are most relevant to talk about with your team. You can also complete the remaining ones at another time if you prefer.

Q. How can we support each other when things are a bit tough?

You may worry that you don't know how to help or that you'll say something wrong, but small things we say or do can make a big difference to someone.

***"One of the most important things you can do on this earth is to let people know they are not alone."***

Shannon L. Alder, Author



Responses might include:

- **Tell them you're worried about them.** You may notice something different in your colleague's behaviour or physical appearance. Letting someone know you're worried shows you care
- **Reassure them.** Let them know you're there to listen when they need to talk
- **Don't force it if someone doesn't want to talk.** Listen without judgment and gently explore their reasons. This might help them work out what to do.
- **Offer help.** Perhaps you can offer to help them with a work task
- **Carry on as usual.** Behaving differently can make someone feel even more isolated. But don't be afraid to offer kind words and somewhere to talk, whether in person, on the phone, or text
- **Offer your time to listen.** This is a very important skill. Ask open questions that start with 'where,' 'how,' 'what', and 'when.' This can help to get the person talking. Inviting them for a sit-down and cup of tea can also be a good way to help them relax, open up, and alleviate some of the stress.

Suggestions/ ideas:

Notes:

**Q. What other main areas at work can lead to stress?**

Examples might be:

- Unable to cope with work demands
- Unable to control the way in which they have to work
- Not enough information and support
- Issues with work relationships or bullying
- Don't fully understand their role or responsibilities
- Don't feel engaged if the business is undergoing change

**Q. What have you done to help yourself if you've gone through a difficult time, and how did it help?**

Responses might include;

- Taking up/doing more exercise
- Enjoying the outdoors, such as walking, running, cycling, and camping
- Taking up a new hobby, such as baking, art, reading, music, gardening, or woodwork
- Relaxation, such as mindfulness, meditation, or yoga
- Mind challenges such as quizzes, puzzles, or learning a new language

**Q. What might stop somebody from talking about their stress or mental health**

Responses might include:

- Stigma attached to mental health
- Being judged/negative perceptions
- Others might not understand
- May feel ashamed or embarrassed
- Being seen as dangerous or a threat to others
- Feel they may lose their job
- Being talked about behind their back
- Feel they should be able to control or overcome it themselves

**Q: Scenario: Read the below scenario to your team, then ask them the question at the end. How might they support someone in a similar situation?**

Aamir has been given more responsibility at work but feels he's struggling to fulfil his role. His confidence is low, and he's stressed about it.

Julie's noticed that Aamir is more withdrawn than usual; he looks tired and isn't interacting with others.

It's evident that there's something wrong with Aamir, but it looks like he isn't comfortable talking about it.

**What can Julie do – how might she approach Aamir and help to support him through this challenging time? What would you do in this situation?**

Suggestions/ ideas:



Summary/Wrap-up

 1 minute

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. Good mental health gives us a sense of purpose, confidence, the energy to do the things we want to do, and the ability to deal with any challenges we face in life. So, it's important to acknowledge if your mental health is suffering and talk to someone as soon as possible.

Resources:

- AHDB: Support for farmers: <https://ahdb.org.uk/support-for-farmers>
- FarmWell: Personal resilience: <http://farmwell.org.uk/personal-resilience/>
- Farming Community Network: Health issues <https://fcn.org.uk/help-health-issues/>
- Just Talk Agri: Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/justtalkagri/>
- NHS: Get help with stress: <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/feelings-and-symptoms/stress/>
- NHS: Better Health - Every mind matters: <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/>
- RABI: Useful links for Mental Health and Wellbeing support: <https://rabi.org.uk/how-we-help/useful-links/>
- Mind: Stress: <https://www.mind.org.uk/search-results/?q=stress#stq=stress&stp=1>
- NFYFC: Rural+Wellbeing - An interactive course designed to support rural young people and raise awareness of mental health issues. Book a course for your own YFC: [Rural+ Wellbeing \(nfyfc.org.uk\)](https://nfyfc.org.uk)

Toolbox Talk participants

Toolbox Talk: **Managing stress at work**

Name of farm .....Date .....

Talk leader name.....

| Name | Signature | Date |
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