



# Connect Inspire Achieve

## May 2019 Enhance Webinar #1: Let's Talk About Mental Health

On Friday, May 3rd, the DGN hosted the first webinar in their behavioral health mini-series during Mental Health Awareness Month. The first webinar was titled, "Let's Talk About Mental Health" and was presented by Dr. Diane Rohlman, Ph.D., from the University of Iowa.

Dr. Rohlman began her presentation by discussing some of the stressors farmers face today. First, she covered how farmer's finances have been taking a hit the last several years and how this is not expected to go away. She also discussed how much of a high-risk profession farming is and how farmers have the highest rate of fatal injuries over industries like construction, transportation/warehousing, and manufacturing. She also briefly covered the opioid crisis and the impact it is having on rural communities. Dr. Rohlman also touched on the lack of mental health providers in Wisconsin. This may lead someone to not seek treatment because it is not easily accessible. This began the conversation on the types of stressors a farmer faces today.

Farmers face many stressors including maintaining/purchasing equipment, weather, government regulations, high-interest rates, livestock illness, commodity prices, family problems and occasionally a sense of isolation. Not all stressors are bad stressors, however, if that stress is never going away it may lead to chronic stress. Chronic stress can lead to depression, anxiety, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, and obesity. Dr. Rohlman said some good indicators of chronic stress in a farmer are changes to their routine, if the care of their livestock declines, increases in farm accidents, the appearance of the farmstead declining or the children showing any signs of stress. Once you have identified the stressors, there are a few ways you can figure out how to help.

If you are the one who is stressed, try slowing down, taking a deep breath, exercising, or talking about your problems. If someone you know is having trouble with their mental health, take time to talk and listen to them while encouraging them to get back into a routine of doing things. Be sure you are non-critical and non-judgemental to their situation. Again, try to recognize the signs of stress. If you are not sure how to handle a situation like this, the Mental Health First Aid (Michigan State University Extension Program) and the Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) programs provide excellent ag-related training pieces.

Dr. Rohlman also talked about how the suicide rate in farmers is always higher than those in other industries. There was a discussion of the signs, symptoms and how to engage someone who may be thinking about attempting suicide. She also presented resources that are available

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including the National Farm Aid Hotline, Suicide Prevention Hotline, AODA Treatment program, Iowa Concern, or SAMHSA.

Dr. Rohlman concluded her presentation by encouraging us to understand the factors impacting mental health, recognizing the signs and symptoms and learning more about the strategies to help you or someone you may know.

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