



SURVIVING THE BUSY SEASON



By Lesley Kelly, Farmer and Co-Founder of the Do More Agriculture Foundation

In farming, we often talk about and understand the inevitable change of seasons. From the change of weather, operations, life cycle of our animals and crops to markets, we go through a variety of seasons that are sometimes welcomed and other times, can be challenging and detrimental to both the farm and our mental health.

Living through difficult times can take a heavy toll on your mood, health, and outlook. It can leave you feeling helpless and overwhelmed by stress and anxiety. You may be painfully grieving all that you've lost, flooded by a slew of difficult, conflicting emotions, or uncertain about how to move on or forward with your life and business. You may even feel that your life is totally out of control and you're powerless to affect whatever may happen next.

At some point in our lives, most of us will face times that are extra stressful or that even shake us to our core. At those times, having strong coping strategies can make a huge difference. You might not be in complete control of these difficulties, but you have a choice in how they impact the way you feel.

Here is some advice that farmers shared on X, formerly Twitter, on what helps them during a tough season:

Having a plan and being willing to change.

@chaduthf

Accept that you do not know what the year will be like. Uncertainty. The hard part is accepting that there is risk, yet where there is risk, there is also opportunity.

@robsommerville1

Vacation isn't the reward for hard work. It's regrouping to get back at it and kick butt. Different mindset.

@KoreyPeters

Don't get hung up on making a profit if you have the last few years. Break even is okay short term, look at the averages.

@rgstone1

Good friends, managing cycles, behind every challenge is an opportunity

@kristjanhebert

One foot in front of the other. Also, a solid financial advisor (and team) is valuable.

@cwbrowncom

I always reserve judgment till the year is complete. What might look bad now can actually turn out okay. Plan accordingly but stay hopeful.

@kowalchukfarms1

Largely, soldier on, maintain the course and keep long term goals in mind. Concentrate on doing the best possible job you can given the conditions that arise.

@405farmer

I can't always swing for the fence. So I can focus on a base hit and see what I can do with that.

@PrinceVFarms

Mental health experts agree on their advice. Here are their top tips to cope with hard times:

1. Maintaining or changing your perspective

If you're facing a challenging time, it's natural to feel overwhelmed. Reframing your perspective — seeing things from a new angle — can help you step away from this mindset. Whatever you'd say to your best friend, say the same to yourself.

An example of a reframe would be: 'I know it feels like this will be forever, and I know logically it's not. I have been through hard things before and came out OK. I know I will get through this, too.'

2. Embracing emotions

Emotions don't go away if we ignore them. They come out later and in ways that we don't quite understand. The best thing to do when the going gets tough is to acknowledge your emotional experience and allow yourself to feel.

Feeling and expressing your emotions is an essential part of healing. A fallacy is thinking this isn't a time to try and be strong. Feeling the feelings is tough but imperative. Allow yourself to grieve or process what is happening.

3. Practicing positive projection

Most difficult situations have a possible upside or a pending end date. For example, the last day of harvest. By focusing on the future positives is an effective strategy for individuals who are going through a hard time. This refers to focusing on the possible positive outcomes of a situation.

A positive projection requires turning positive intention into words. For example:

- o The survival rate for my illness is 85%, and if I follow my treatment plan, I can be in that group.
- o The markets are at their lowest but I have some risk management tools available and will be meeting with the accountant to review our numbers and make a plan.
- o I lost a calf the other day after days of trying to save it. I tried everything that I could do and it was out of my control. Helping and trying is what makes me a good farmer and animal steward.

4. Establishing healthy rituals

Rituals can anchor you in a time of change and uncertainty. Healthy rituals could include:

- o Adding a regular mindfulness practice.
- o Committing to daily morning workouts or stretching.
- o Practicing different relaxation techniques.
- o Scheduling coffee with a friend or neighbour once a week.
- o Journaling every night.

5. Connecting with your support system

Your support system is all those people who care about you and can be there for you to offer practical help, a word of advice, or encouragement. It can feel

isolating to be going through a hard time, but surrounding yourself with a trusted support system is very necessary. Feeling connected can boost your mood and help you cope with challenging situations.

6. Tapping into your coping tools

Identifying what has helped you cope in the past can support you in your current situation. Do what you know works like meeting friends for dinner, going to the gym or going on a walk, reading a book that interests you. Another tool is to take challenging situations one step at a time by breaking down significant events into smaller, more manageable parts is an essential and adaptive part of survival. We have to find those coping techniques that are natural and healthy for us to survive.

If you or someone you know is struggling with addiction, remember that support is available. AgTalk provides a safe and anonymous space for individuals in the agricultural community to connect, share, and receive support. Don't hesitate to reach out and explore the resources available at AgTalk for guidance and assistance. For more support visit www.domore.ag/crisis-contacts.



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MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

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