

UNL Extension: Acreage Insights

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April Is Stress Awareness Month

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Did you know that April is Stress Awareness Month? Most of us have felt “stressed out,” but when this feeling persists, stress becomes chronic and can negatively impact our careers, quality of life, and our bodies. The first step is to pinpoint your stressors. To identify your true sources of stress, look closely at your habits, attitude, and excuses. Pinpointing your true stressors may be more difficult than you realize because some of them may be very subtle. Sometimes you may fail to notice your own stress-inducing thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Tips to Help Manage Stress

- Know your limits. You may be surprised by the number of stressors in your life that you can eliminate. Learning to say no is an important part of knowing your limits and sticking to them. Whether in your personal or professional life, taking on more than you can handle is a guaranteed recipe for stress.
- Alter stressful situations. If you can't avoid a stressful situation, try to alter it. Finding a way to change things can prevent a stressful situation from reoccurring in the future. Express your feelings to someone who is bothering you in an open and respectful way. And, when you ask someone to change, be willing to compromise and do the same.
- Try changing how you react. If you can't change a stressor, try changing how you react to it. Adapting to stressful situations can help regain your sense of control by altering your expectations and attitude. Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective. When you're down, reflect on all the things you appreciate in your life, including your own positive qualities and talents.
- Nurture yourself. Beyond a take-charge approach and a positive attitude, you can reduce stress in your life by nurturing yourself. Nurturing yourself is a necessity, not a luxury. Set aside time to relax in your daily schedule. Do something you enjoy every day, whether it is playing the piano, going for a walk, calling a good friend, or reading a book.
- Increase your resistance to stress. Did you know you can increase your resistance to stress by strengthening your physical health? Exercising regularly and eating a healthy diet can help combat stress. Make time for at least 30 minutes of activity every day. Start your day off with a healthy breakfast and keep your energy up and your mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals and snacks throughout the day.

Remember that stress is defined as mental, emotional, or physical tension or strain and too much can negatively affect your health. Some solutions to lower stress are to make a conscious effort to spend more time in a lower gear, take time in between bursts to rest and recuperate, or learn how to change your point of view and look at the positive rather than the negative aspect of a situation. Check out www.food.unl.edu for more food, nutrition, and health information.