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Minnesota Coalition, Sowing the Seeds of Hope
AgriWellness

WEB-BASED STRESS EDUCATION FOR AGRICULTURAL PEOPLE

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Outline

- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Needs Assessment Results
- Web-Based Stress Education Workshops
- Evaluation Process
- Questions and Discussion

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In Minnesota...

- Crisis line, available statewide 24/7/365, operated by Crisis Connection. Handles about 4,000 rural calls annually
– 1-866-379-6363
- Public policy advocacy
- Taking initiatives in telehealth
- New initiatives being funded by Otto Bremer Foundation

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Otto Bremer Foundation grant:

- Supports work at AgriWellness, and in Minnesota and North Dakota, in 2008-2010
- Minnesota funding:
 - Stabilizes crisis line funding
 - Enables some statewide promotion of line
 - Funds web-based, stress-oriented seminar pilot

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REVIEW OF RESEARCH STUDIES

Denise Herbst

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Rural Stress Overview

- Not much good research
- 90% have health insurance
- Half spent >10% of income on health
- 23%: medical expenses → financial difficulty
- 86% of rural MN communities had MH services
- More smoking, suicide, vehicle fatalities, less seat belt use
- Ag--highest occupational fatalities and suicide

General Agricultural Stress

- Low after recent good years
- Expected to rise in next 3 years
- Low in successful two-generation agricultural families
- Decreased with higher income
- Increased with age and larger farms

Non-Mental Health Stressors

- Financial concerns
- Poor health and injuries
- Overwork, balancing farm and family
- Unpredictability
- Isolation, especially women
- Bureaucracy, new technology

Stressors may differ by gender and age

Rural Women

- Off- farm employment
- Role overload
- Invisibility
- Weather
- Social isolation
- Unpredictable income
- Health
- Lack of operational knowledge
- Hard on daughters-in-law

Stressors may differ by gender and age

Rural Men

- Suicide increasing
- Health and injury concerns
- Less stress with longer marriages

Age

- Stress tended to increase with age
- Most stress in 30-59 year-old group

Mental Health Concerns

- Depression and suicide
- Anxiety
- Substance abuse
- Poorer MH as rurality increased
- Less availability and use of MH treatment in rural areas
- Poor recognition of MH issues

Symptoms intensify in times of family or farm crisis

- Loss of 2100 MN mid-sized farms from 2002-2007
- Stressors same, but more intense
- Similar symptoms, plus violence
- Men: Need for achievement, stoic attitudes
- Women: Worse if must change careers, if spouse disabled

Useful Strategies

- Knowledge about stress and mental health
- Knowledge about stress management strategies
- Some learn best through group interaction
- Take rural culture and gender expectations into account

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Karen Shirer, Ph.D.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT, Feb. 2009

- 197 people accessed the questionnaire
- 130 responded:
 - Averaged 24 years working with agricultural people
 - Average age of 50
 - 55% female
 - Education: 37% bachelor's, 47% master's
- Worked with 24,688 agricultural Minnesotans in past year

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Parts of MN by RDC

Northwest	8.2 %	Central	9.3
Headwaters	0.4	Mid-Minnesota	11.8
Arrowhead	1.6	Upper MN Valley	3.6
West Central	14.2	Southwest	11.4
North Central	5.5	South Central	6.7
East Central	3.8	Southeast	15.3

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Professions, % of total responders

Health Care		36.7 %	
Nursing	21.7		
(13.2% public health)		Extension	9.4
Mental health	11.3	Community action	6.7
Other health care	6.7	Social work	5.7
Ag business	24.5 %	Faith-based	3.8
Ag finance/econ dev/ lender mediation	11.3	Misc/can't tell	10.4
Farm business management	13.2		

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Types of Conflict

Parent-child/teen	12.1 %
Spouse/life partner	9.1
Family violence	7.6
Caretaking older relative	7.3
Government/authorities	6.1
Relatives in same business	5.6
Neighbors	4.7

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Signs of Emotional Stress

Depression signs	14.4 %
Increased irritability	13.9
Pain problems	11.0
Smoking too much	9.6
Too much alcohol or drugs	9.2
Hopelessness, suicidal talk	8.4
Physical threats/aggression	6.6

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Signs of Emotional Stress (cont.)

Sick more often	6.6 %
Worry/anxiety	6.0
Less community activity	5.8
Less spiritual activity	3.4
Gambling too much	2.5
Too much/inappropriate Internet	1.0

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Sources of Financial Stress

High costs of inputs	31.2 %
Health insurance	27.9
Fluctuating commodity prices	25.7
Cash flow, agricultural business	16.3
Cash flow, family needs	16.0
Health, injury	15.8
Weather	15.2
Higher taxes from higher land values	13.5
Inadequate employment opportunity	11.6
High interest, inadequate credit	9.9
Unable to exit or enter farming	3.4
Other	6.5

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Coping Strategies, Financial Stress

Spouse holding off-farm job	33.1 %
Self holding off-farm job	26.7
Decrease discretionary spending	19.0
Postponing maintenance	10.8
Taking on more debt	10.0
Decreasing insurance	8.5
Selling land/assets	3.3
Other	5.2

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Stress Education Strategies

Professionals thought 19% of agricultural people would view webinars.

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% of Professionals who Suggest Additional Strategies

List community resources/referrals	73.7 %
Speakers go to commodity groups	71.6
Vouchers for mental health services	67.4
Financial counseling/education	62.1
Debt mediation/consolidation	62.1
Printed materials on stress or financial management	56.8
Visits by stress/financial counselor	54.7 %

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% of Professionals who Suggest Additional Strategies (cont.)

Crisis Connection hotline information	48.4 %
In-person classes on stress/conflict	47.4
Referral to family/MH counseling	44.2
Internet info on stress/financial coping	44.2
In-person peer support groups	32.6
On-line peer support groups	27.4
Other	11.6

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% of Professionals who are Willing to Help Publicize Webinars

Yes	24.5 %
Maybe, if more information	39.4
Methods of assistance:	
Distribute printed brochures	75.6
Send email to clients	35.6
Email list of professionals who can refer to clients	15.6
Other	24.4

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WEB-BASED WORKSHOPS

Katherine M. (Kay) Slama,
Ph.D., MSS

Principles

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- Use normalizing language
 - Stress, resilience, information, education
 - Minimize clinical language
 - Professional development, life management
 - Respect rural cultural norms: Confidentiality, independence, family, The Land
- Short segments
- Evaluate every segment
- Many ag scenarios by rural people
- Use Extension website

Design

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- Voice + PowerPoint
- Choice of outline or text
- Instructions to give viewers control
- Self-assessment questionnaires
- Crisis Connection hotline for questions
- Links to other parts of the program
- Links to good web and paper resources
- Introduction: Information about partners

Workshops

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- Basic stress information
- Decisions about your own stress
 - Assess stress, including priorities
 - Readiness to change
 - Acceptance/self-care skills, vs Change skills

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Acceptance/Self-Care Workshops

- Physical stress management skills
 - Nutrition, exercise, moderate substance use
 - Relaxation
 - Sleep hygiene
- Emotional stress management skills
 - Communication, social support, pleasant activities, spiritual/mindfulness activities
- Attitude stress management skills
 - Self-esteem
 - Positive thinking
 - Using values to set priorities

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Change Skills Workshops

- Introduction to change skills
- Changing what I do
 - Reminders/cues
 - Self-rewards
- Changing how I think
 - Stopping worrisome thoughts
 - Challenging negative thinking
 - Making decisions
- Changing how I deal with conflict
 - Listening skills
 - Assertiveness
 - Problem-solving

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How to Get good Help

- De-stigmatize professional help
- Depression, anxiety, CD questionnaires
- Finding good providers
- How to help someone who might have suicidal thoughts

LET'S HELP EACH OTHER

- You can use Web-Based Stress Education Workshops for your clients and patients
 - Set up a computer and printer for users?
- You can help publicize WBSEWs
 - Send out information about them on email lists
 - Include them in your newsletters
 - Print out pamphlets and put them out
- You can give us feedback about WBSEWs

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WORKSHOP EVALUATION

J. Patrick Hart, Ph.D.

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Evaluation Framework

- Independent Evaluator
- Broader SSoH Evaluation Context
 - Telehealth behavioral services
 - Theory considerate approach
- Workshop Implementation and Outcomes
 - Design and data commensurate with resources
- Build foundation for future

Implementation Evaluation

- Progress, barriers and modifications to workshop objectives contained in grant
 - Needs assessment and panel input on educational response
 - Develop and pilot workshops – 100 participants
 - Refine and deliver workshops – 500 participants
- Participant demographics
 - Age, residence, occupation, sex

Outcome Evaluation

- Improvements (changes) to website and workshop structure and content – participants and implementers
- Workshop usefulness/relevance – participants
- Intentions and behaviors – participants
- Workshop-linked Crisis Connection caller volume and content - participants and call center
