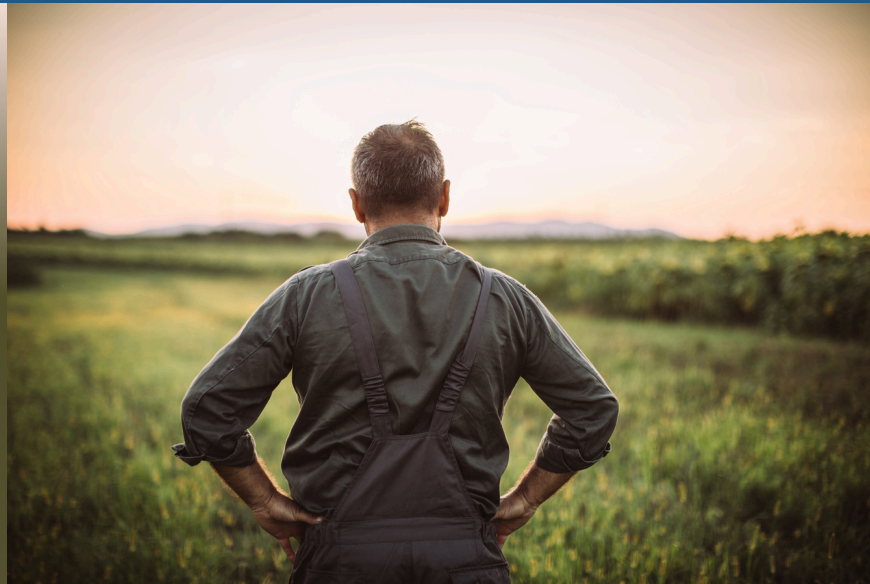


PLANTING RESILIENCE: SMALL DAILY HABITS THAT HELP FARMERS MANAGE STRESS



Summer on the farm is busy. Long days, changing weather, and a to-do list that grows faster than the corn can wear on anyone.

If you have worked the land for years, you already know this. Farm work asks a lot from your body and your mind. During busy season, small routines can help take some of the edge off and make hard days a little easier.

The ideas below are simple and practical. Most take five to ten minutes or less, and they fit into chores, field time, and shop work.

Before the day gets rolling, take 30 seconds to check in

Before you grab your boots, pause for a minute.

- **Ask yourself:** “How am I doing today?”
- **Notice one thing:** tight shoulders, poor sleep, a short fuse, low energy, or maybe a clear head
- **Pick one habit from the list below** to try today. You only need to choose one.

1. Sip steady, not just when you get thirsty

When to fit it in: Keep a water bottle or jug in the cab and one on the workbench. Take a few sips at each gate, load, or field pass.

Why it helps: When it gets hot and the day runs long, hydration helps with energy, focus, and mood.

See the next page for more.

Make it easier: Refill your water at lunch and again midafternoon. If your clinician says it is safe for you, keep a snack on hand too.

Try this: If routines help, tie drinking water to something you already do every time, like opening a gate or stopping the tractor.

2. Do a quick stretch while equipment warms up

When to fit it in: While equipment warms up, before climbing in, or after you park.

Why it helps: A little movement can ease stiffness in your back, hips, and hands, and help you feel less wound up.

Try this quick set:

- Shoulder rolls, 10 each direction
- Gentle hamstring stretch with one foot on the step, 20 seconds each side
- Open and close your hands, 10 times

If something hurts, back off. If you deal with regular pain, ask your clinician what stretches are safe for you.

3. Do one neighbor check each day

When to fit it in: During coffee, while fueling up, or at the end of the day.

Why it helps: Busy season can get isolating. A quick call or text can help more than people realize.

What to say: Keep it simple.

“Thinking of you. How’s your day going?” No big conversation required.

4. Take a shade-and-reset break

When to fit it in: Midday, or any time you catch yourself getting irritable or foggy.

Why it helps: A short break in the shade can help your body cool down and your mind reset.

Try this: Park in the shade, drink some water, stretch, and take a few slow breaths. Set a timer for five minutes, then get back to it.

5. Use the “next right step” rule

When to fit it in: Any time the list starts feeling too long.

Why it helps: Stress gets heavier when everything feels urgent at once. Breaking things down helps you keep moving.

How to do it: Ask yourself, “What is the next right step for the next 15 minutes?” Do that one thing, then reassess.

Farming teaches people to push through. That strength is important, but it also means a lot of folks carry stress longer than they need to.

If stress, low mood, or irritability starts affecting your sleep, your relationships, or your day-to-day life, it may help to talk with someone.

WE CAN HELP.

Our hospital-based outpatient program is designed to meet the unique needs of older adults experiencing depression and/or anxiety related to life changes that are often associated with aging or a chronic diagnosis. Anyone can make a referral to our program, including self-referrals, provider referrals, or community consultations.

Call us today at