



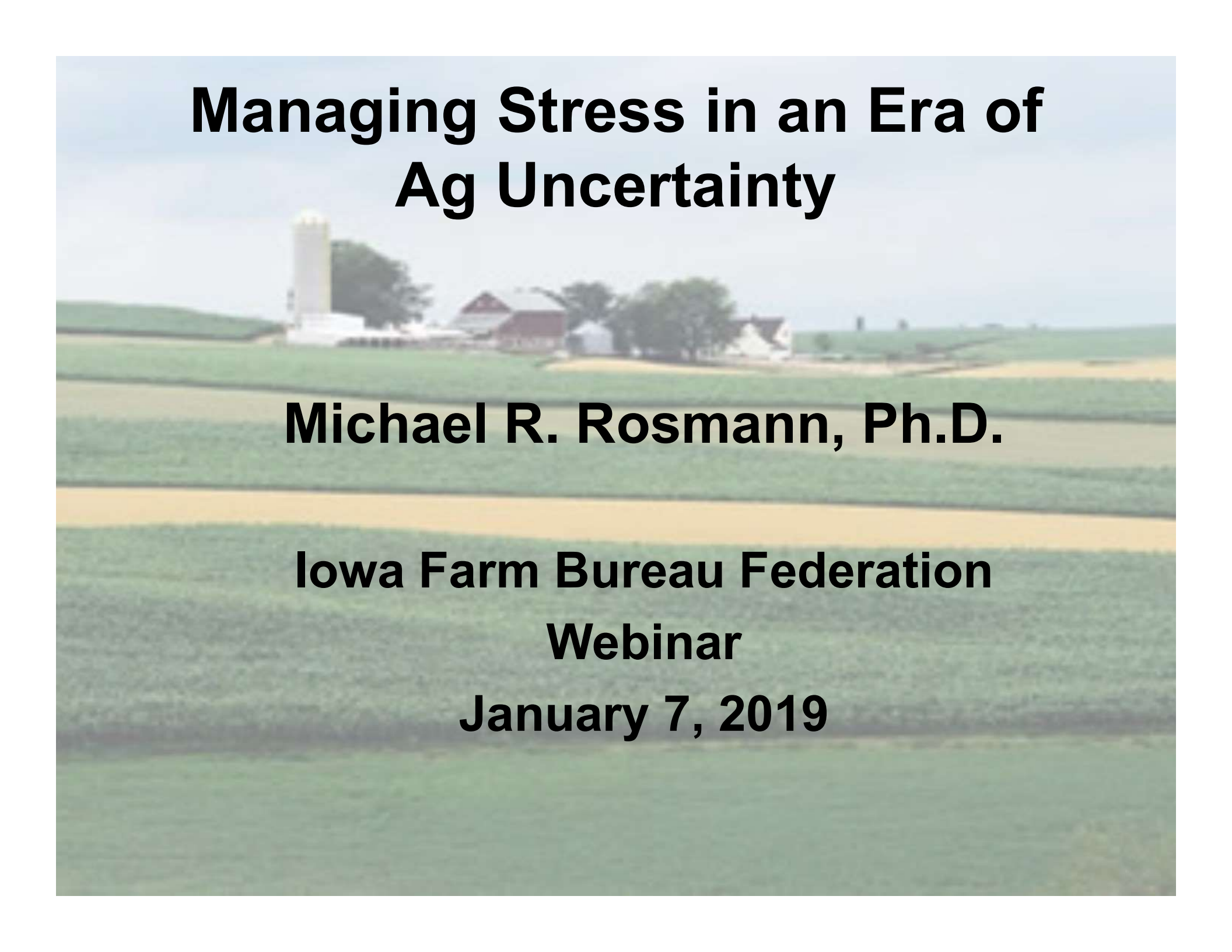
*Iowa Farm Bureau's Margin Management Webinar Series presents:*

# Managing Stress in an Era of Ag Uncertainty

Monday, January 7, 1:00 pm

Speaker:

Dr. Mike Rosmann  
Ag Behavioral Health



# **Managing Stress in an Era of Ag Uncertainty**

**Michael R. Rosmann, Ph.D.**

**Iowa Farm Bureau Federation  
Webinar**

**January 7, 2019**

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# Why Use “Behavioral” Instead of “Mental”

- ▶ More comprehensive and holistic: Includes addictions treatments, psychiatric care, psychological services, and any interventions that impact our behavior
- ▶ The term “mental health care” necessitates medications or psychotherapy, whereas “behavioral health” is understandable and makes us responsible for our thoughts and actions
- ▶ We are in charge of most of our behavior and can manage ourselves
- ▶ The preferred term of most US government agencies

# The Agrarian Imperative

Like many animal species, humans have a basic need to acquire sufficient territory and the necessary resources (e.g., capital, equipment, buildings, livestock) to produce the food and shelter required by their families and communities.

Also called “the agrarian personality”, this genetically programmed instinct drives farmers to hang onto their land at all costs. The agrarian imperative instills farmers to work incredibly hard, to endure unusual pain and hardship and to take uncommon risks.

\*Rosmann, M.R. (2010). The Agrarian Imperative. Journal of Agromedicine, 15(2), 71-75.


Produced by Michael R. Rosmann, Ph.D., June, 2016



# The Most Common Diagnosed Behavioral Health Conditions of Distressed Farm People

- ▶ Relationship problems, such as partner and marital problems, domestic and child abuse, quarreling with elders, blame and anger are usually the first symptoms, about 40% of diagnoses\*
- ▶ Adjustment problems, which are temporary exacerbations of anxiety, depression and other behavior problems that remit when stress diminishes, about 24% of diagnoses\*
- ▶ Anxiety disorders, including excessive worry, panic, PTSD, 11% of diagnoses\*

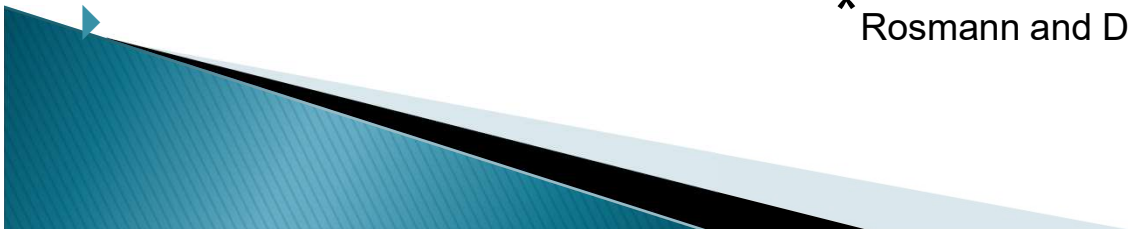
\* Rosmann and Delworth, 1993; Rosmann and Stucker, 2008.  
Some people had more than one diagnosis.



# Behavioral Health Problems of the Agricultural Population, cont.

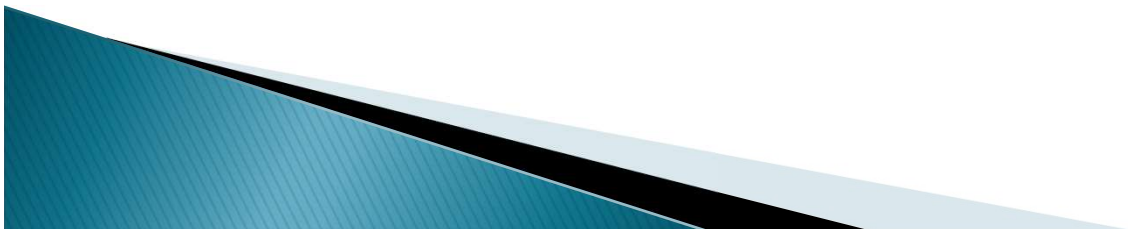
- ▶ Forms of depression, with major depression more common than bipolar disorder, 18-33% of diagnoses\*
- ▶ Substance misuse, either alcohol, street drugs or prescribed medications, 7%, but often co-occurs about 40% of the time with other diagnoses
- ▶ Personality disorders are uncommon in the agricultural population, about 1.5%
- ▶ Psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia are rare, <1% of the agricultural population

\* Rosmann and Delworth, 1993; Rosmann and Stucker, 2008.



# Contributors to Farm Stress

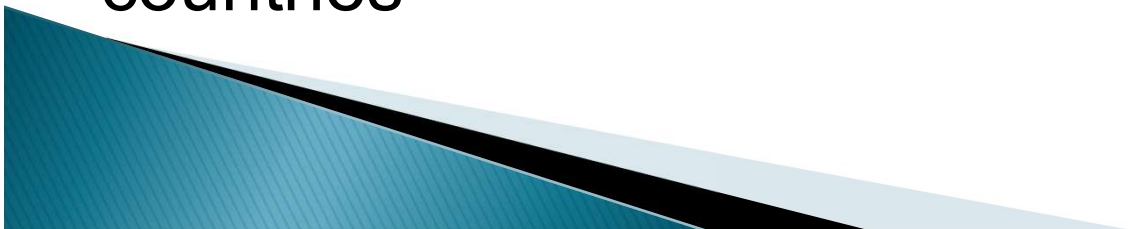
- ▶ The most important stressors are those we can't control and which threaten the loss of our farming operations.
- ▶ Often the stress results from financial threats to the operation, but may be due to unpredictable events like bad weather, disease outbreaks, personal health issues, market shifts and other factors beyond our personal control
- ▶ Most people can handle two stressors simultaneously, but three is usually beyond their capacity





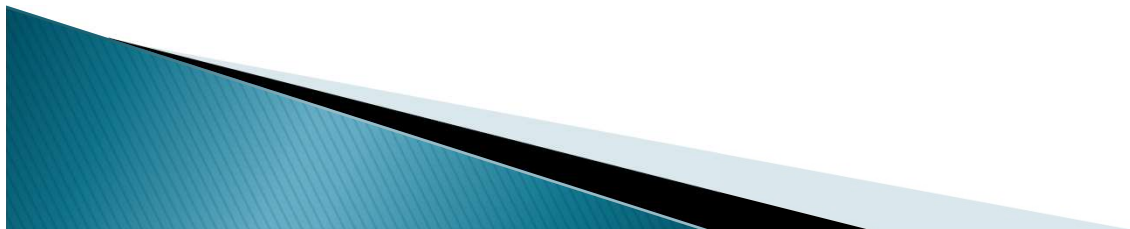
# Suicide by the Agricultural Population is Higher than any Other Occupational Group

- ▶ Includes farmers, ranchers, farm workers, migrant laborers, fishers, and foresters
- ▶ Suicide in general has become a national crisis, and among farmers in particular
- ▶ Farmer suicide is twice as high as the rate of suicide among military veterans
- ▶ Farmer suicide is worsening in most agricultural countries



# Danger Signals of Excessive Stress, Depression and Suicide


- ▶ Verbalizations about hopelessness (e.g., “It’s no use, I feel like giving up, What’s the use in trying.”)
- ▶ Verbalizations and loss of interest or pleasure in doing things that usually are fun, such as “I haven’t laughed in a long time.”
- ▶ Clear statements, like “I feel like letting all my cows go”
- ▶ “Lump in the throat phenomenon” when the person says “I wish I could cry but I can’t”



# Danger Signals cont.

- ▶ Avoiding public events such as church or kids' sports activities and meetings that he/she usually attends
- ▶ Flat affect, retreating behaviors and isolation
- ▶ Deterioration in appearance or health of livestock, the farm, pastures overstocked, machinery and farm facilities unpainted and in disrepair
- ▶ Decline in personal appearance from the usual
- ▶ When exposure to farm chemicals could have occurred, such as during spring planting or applying parasiticides



A photograph of a rural landscape. In the background, there is a farm with a tall yellow silo, a red barn, and a white house. The foreground is a green field. A green text box is overlaid on the image, containing the following text:

**Time for a short break for the  
webinar recording.**  
**We will continue in the next segment.**

# What We Can Do to Help Distressed Farmers

- ▶ Visit them and offer help
- ▶ Don't leave them alone if they appear suicidal, but instead contact family members or others who are around to share concerns
- ▶ Provide options for addressing their concerns, such as outside consultants (e.g., farm business expertise), behavioral health resources (e.g., Hotlines for farmers, community meetings, educational programs) and behavioral health resources (e.g., the best local counselors who understand agriculture)



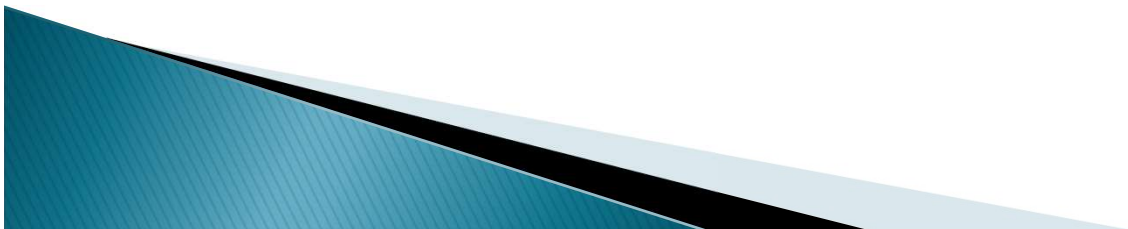
# Managing Our Behavior

- ▶ Behavior, like a feed ration, has ingredients that can be varied to maximize our well-being.
- ▶ Just as animals need an ideal ration to grow the fastest or to produce the most milk, we humans can manage our behavioral well-being: Our daily and weekly behavior rations include how much and how hard we work, sleep, recreate, pray, laugh, talk and engage in stress management



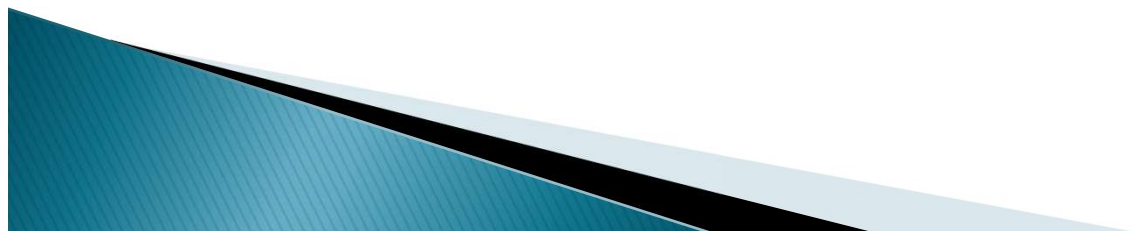
# How to Get A++++ in Developing Agricultural Behavioral Healthcare

- ▶ Acceptable (culturally attuned) services suited to client needs and delivered by providers who understand agriculture
- ▶ Accessible and available when needed, which includes 24/7 emergency calls and emails
- ▶ Affordable without filing insurance claims
- ▶ In languages and delivered by persons familiar with the backgrounds of those being served



# For Farmers, Credibility is Key

- ▶ The providers must know something about agriculture and be familiar with the work of those they are serving
- ▶ The providers must coach and educate the clients rather than to cure their maladjustments—the curing part is up to the clients
- ▶ It's beneficial to see them at their homes or in neutral settings, with sessions varying from a brief check-in to several hours in length
- ▶ Telehealth can assist





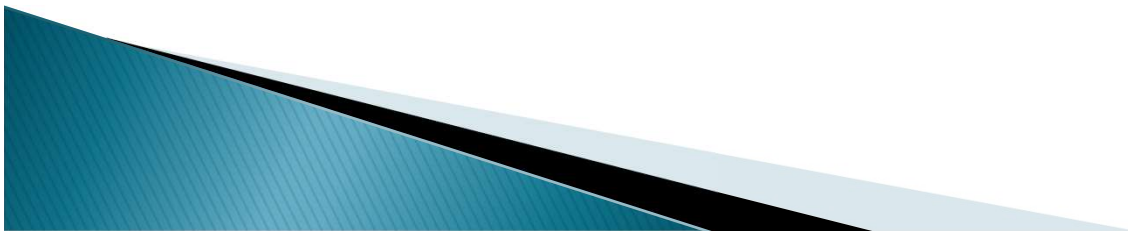
# Ag Behavioral Health Services That Are Best Practices

- ▶ Telephone and email hotlines/helplines
- ▶ Follow-up counseling that is A++++
- ▶ Capacity to refer for ancillary assistance such as legal, medical, emergency, mediation, subusiness consultation and other services
- ▶ Community workshops provide education and emotional support
- ▶ Promote the services through the FSA, on radio, in newspapers, and through agencies
- ▶ Evaluate and modify the services as needed



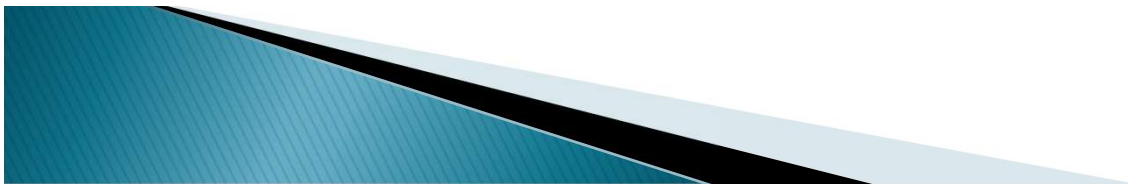
# Specific Behaviors that Help Us Deal with Stress

- ▶ Talking with people who understand our/their dilemma
- ▶ Physical intimacy and comforting touches, such as stroking arms and hands
- ▶ Recreation and breaks away from the stressful environment
- ▶ Prayer and meditation, in the outdoors or any other comforting environment
- ▶ Interacting positively with pets and beloved animals



# Remember That Someone Else Always Has It Worse Than We Do

- ▶ Our distress will diminish when we take charge of it, more than anything else
- ▶ Most problems are resolvable, but succumbing to them by suicide or giving up in other ways are permanent solutions to problems that are usually temporary
- ▶ Anxiety, depression, family issues and most behavioral health problems are resolvable
- ▶ The current attention in the national media to suicide require that we farmers make getting help and prevention of unnecessary deaths a priority



# Additional Information about Behavioral Health Issues in the Farming Community

- ▶ Literature about agricultural behavioral health, resources for healthcare, social, legal, family and many other farming and ranching topics are available from a website maintained by Iowa Farmer Today can be accessed easily by conducting an online search with the words:

Farm and Ranch Life Rosmann,

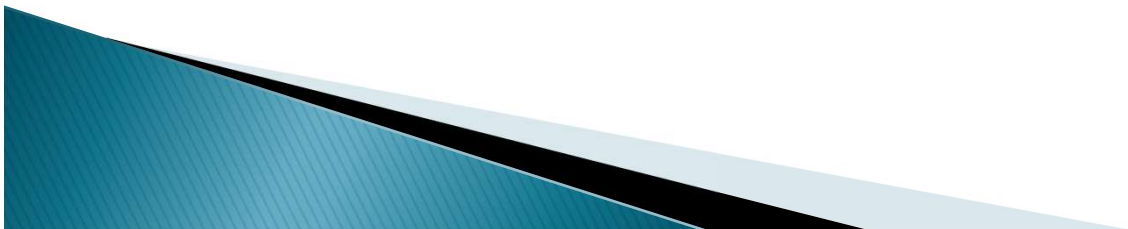
or contact the author at: [mike@agbehavioralhealth.com](mailto:mike@agbehavioralhealth.com)

or via the website: [www.agbehavioralhealth.com](http://www.agbehavioralhealth.com).



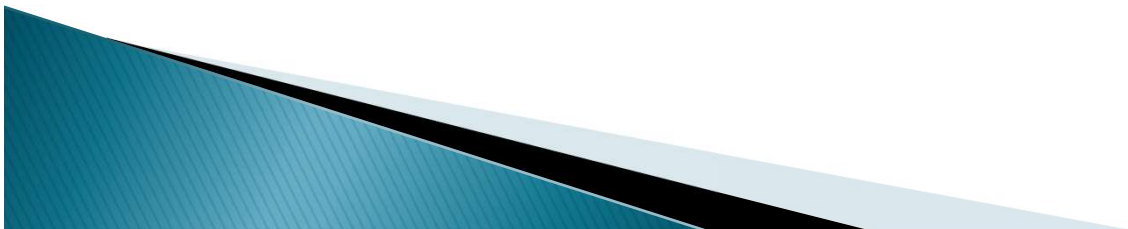
# Further Resources

- ▶ Iowa Concern Hotline 1-800-447-1985
- ▶ National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255
- ▶ Local and regional ISU Extension offices
- ▶ AgriSafe Clinic Network: [www.agrisafe.org](http://www.agrisafe.org)
- ▶ [www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists](http://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists) is a useful website to find professional counselors who understand agriculture



# 2018 Farm Bill

- ▶ The Farmers First Act, sponsored by Senators Joni Ernst and Tami Baldwin, authorizes behavioral health supports and resources as part of the USDA Farm Bill
- ▶ \$10M annually for five years, but appropriation of funds must be finalized
- ▶ Competitive grants will set up farm crisis hotlines, follow-up counseling, community workshops and other types of stress management assistance
- ▶ A joint program of the USDA and DHHS





**Having hope as agricultural producers goes a long way toward restoring faith in farming and ranching and charity among farmers and ranchers.**

Produced by Michael R. Rosmann, Ph.D., March 2012



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- Please take a couple minutes right after the webinar to fill out an evaluation. Please click here: <https://tinyurl.com/19managestress>

This webinar will be recorded and available with materials at the Farm Bureau website:

<https://tinyurl.com/agstress>