

Georgia
Department of
Behavioral Health
& Developmental
Disabilities



Connecting the Dots: Nourishing Staff, Self Care, and Community Resilience

August 24, 2026
Gatlinburg, Tennessee

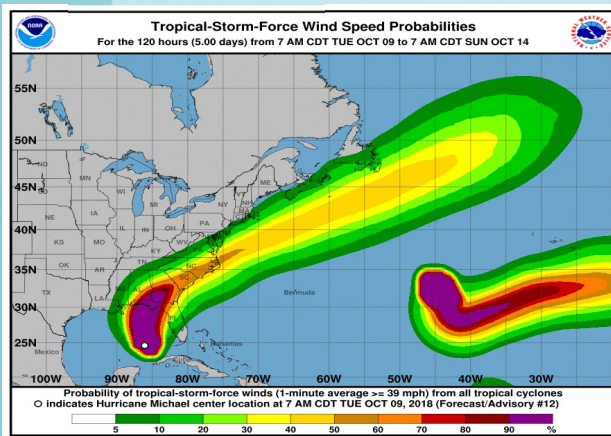
Jennifer Dunn, Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities
Venessa Sims, Georgia Department of Agriculture



DBHDD

Georgia Department
of Behavioral Health &
Developmental Disabilities

Realities for Georgia's Agriculture Community



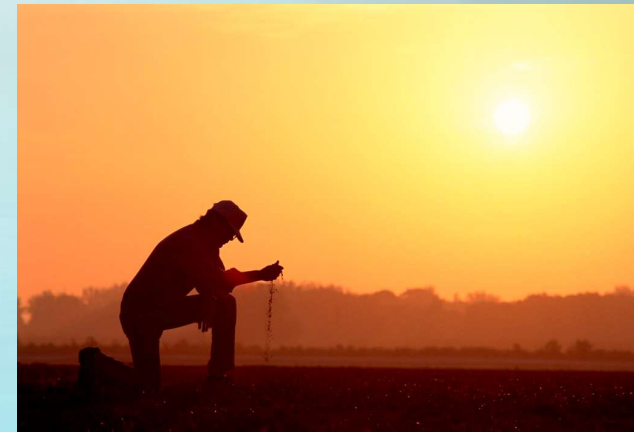
Natural Disasters

Hurricane Michael 2018
Hurricane Idalia 2023
Hurricane Helene, 2024
Biolab Fire, 2024
S GA Fires, 2026



Foreign Animal Disease

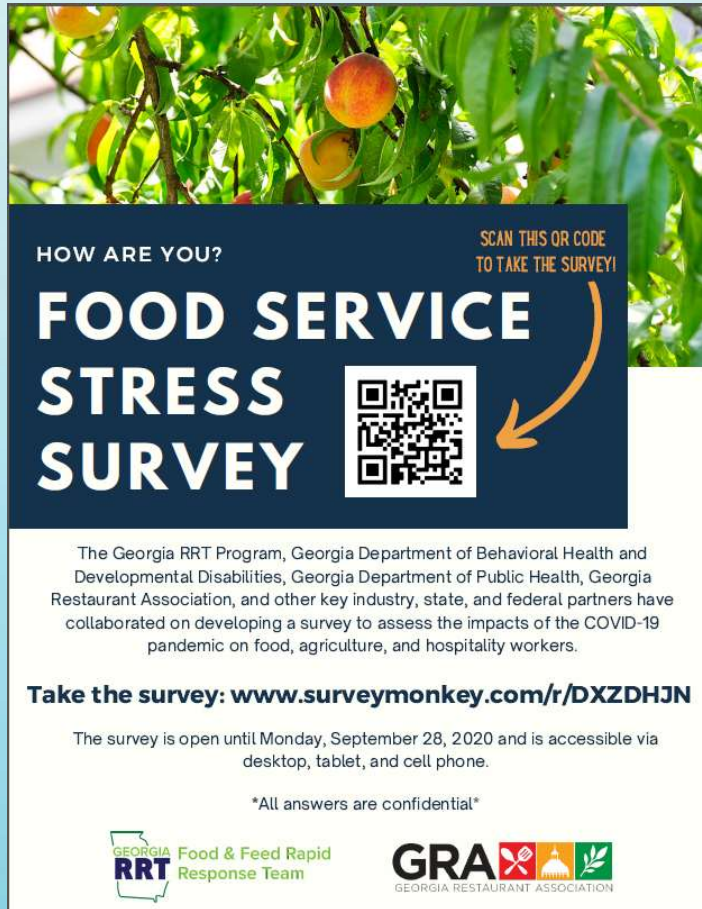
Avian Influenza 2017, 2022-current
New World Screwworm, 2026



Annual Stress

Uncertain Crop Production
Recall Fatigue
Infant Formula Recalls
Food Insecurity
Supply Chain Disruptions
Changes in Public Health Policy

Who is caring for the caregiver?

A poster for the Food Service Stress Survey. The top half features a close-up photograph of ripe peaches on a tree branch. Below the photo is a dark blue rectangular area with white text. The text reads "HOW ARE YOU?" in small letters, followed by "FOOD SERVICE STRESS SURVEY" in large, bold letters. To the right of the title is a QR code. Above the QR code, it says "SCAN THIS QR CODE TO TAKE THE SURVEY!". An orange arrow points from the QR code towards the survey link. Below the QR code area, there is a paragraph of text explaining the survey's purpose and partners. At the bottom, there is a link to take the survey, a note about confidentiality, and logos for the Georgia RRT and the Georgia Restaurant Association.

HOW ARE YOU?

SCAN THIS QR CODE
TO TAKE THE SURVEY!

FOOD SERVICE STRESS SURVEY

The Georgia RRT Program, Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, Georgia Department of Public Health, Georgia Restaurant Association, and other key industry, state, and federal partners have collaborated on developing a survey to assess the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on food, agriculture, and hospitality workers.

Take the survey: www.surveymonkey.com/r/DXZDHJN

The survey is open until Monday, September 28, 2020 and is accessible via desktop, tablet, and cell phone.

All answers are confidential

GEORGIA RRT Food & Feed Rapid Response Team

GRA GEORGIA RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION

Project Survey

The Stress Survey

was deployed on

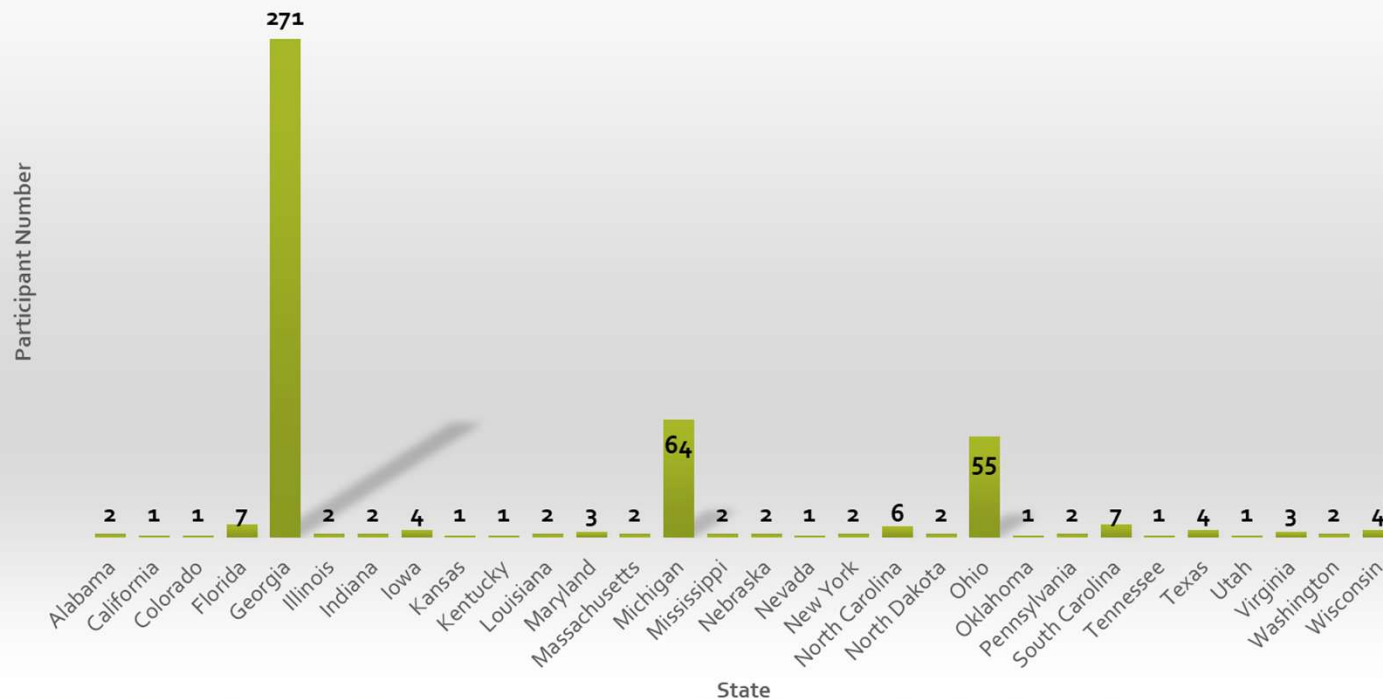
Friday, September 4, 2020

and will run through

Monday, September 28, 2020

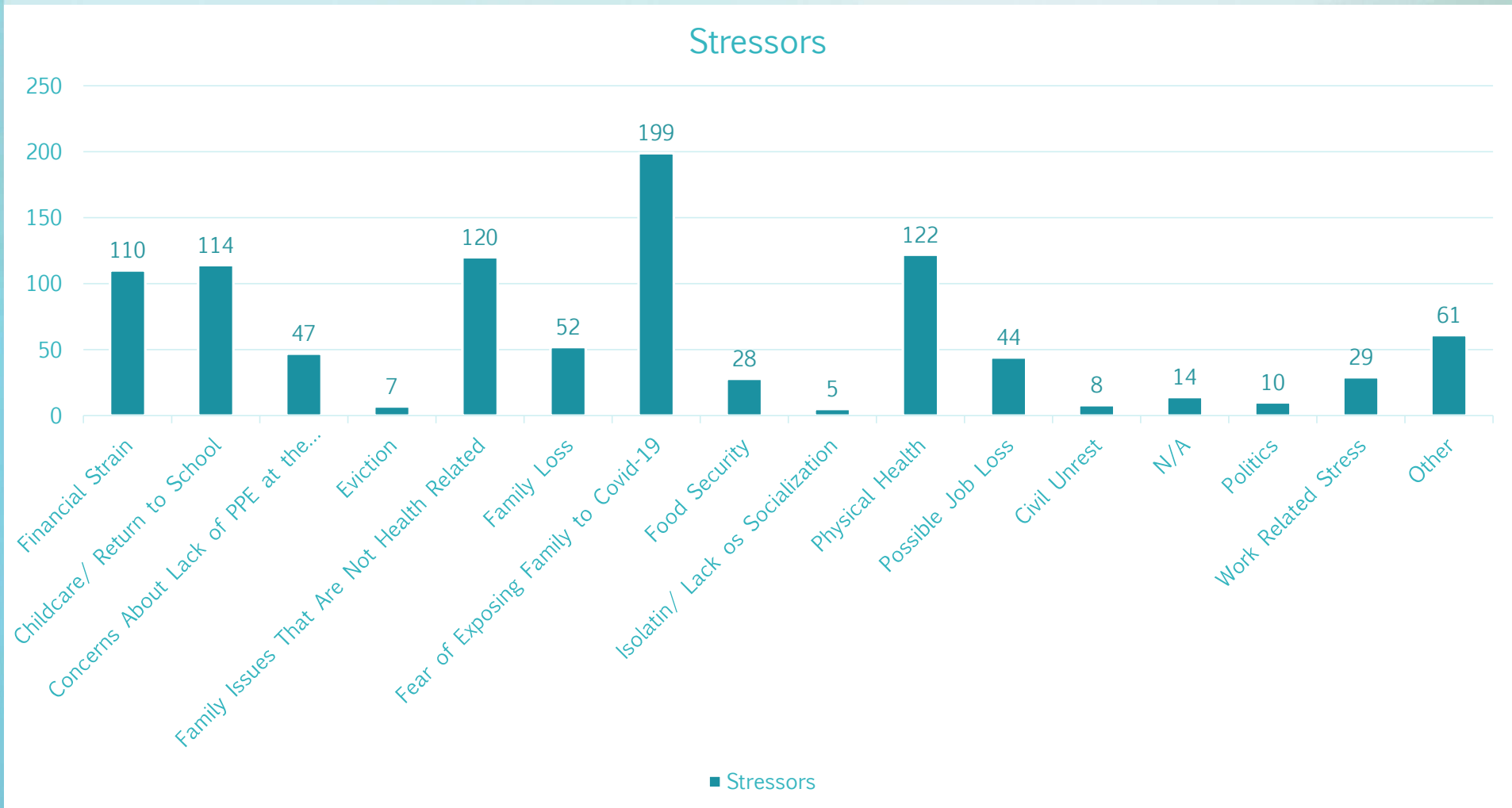
MOST IMPORTANT
THING YOU CAN DO,
DIRECT PEOPLE TO
RESOURCES

Respondents by State

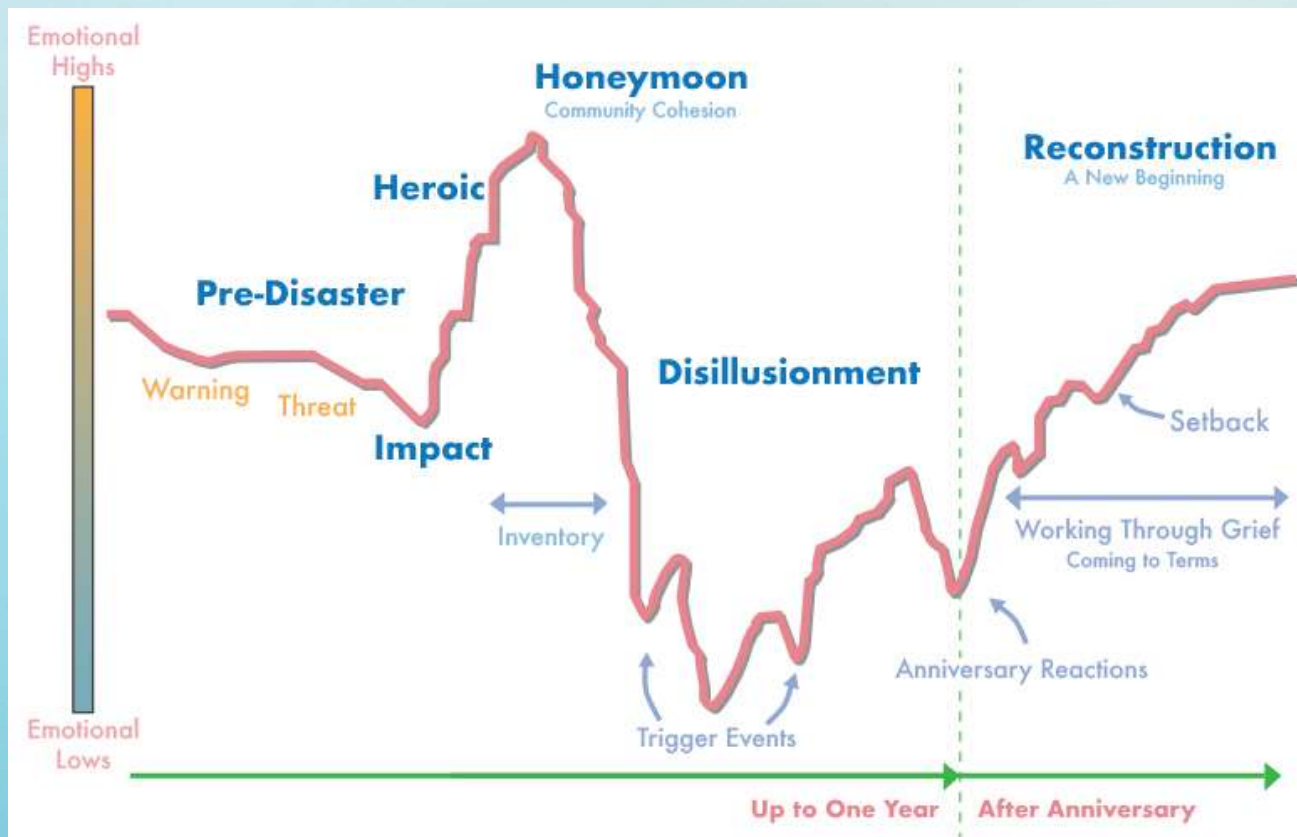


There were respondents from across 30 states.

Contributors to Stress



Phases of Disaster



Where
Are
We
Today?



988
SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE



Georgia
Department of
Behavioral Health
& Developmental
Disabilities



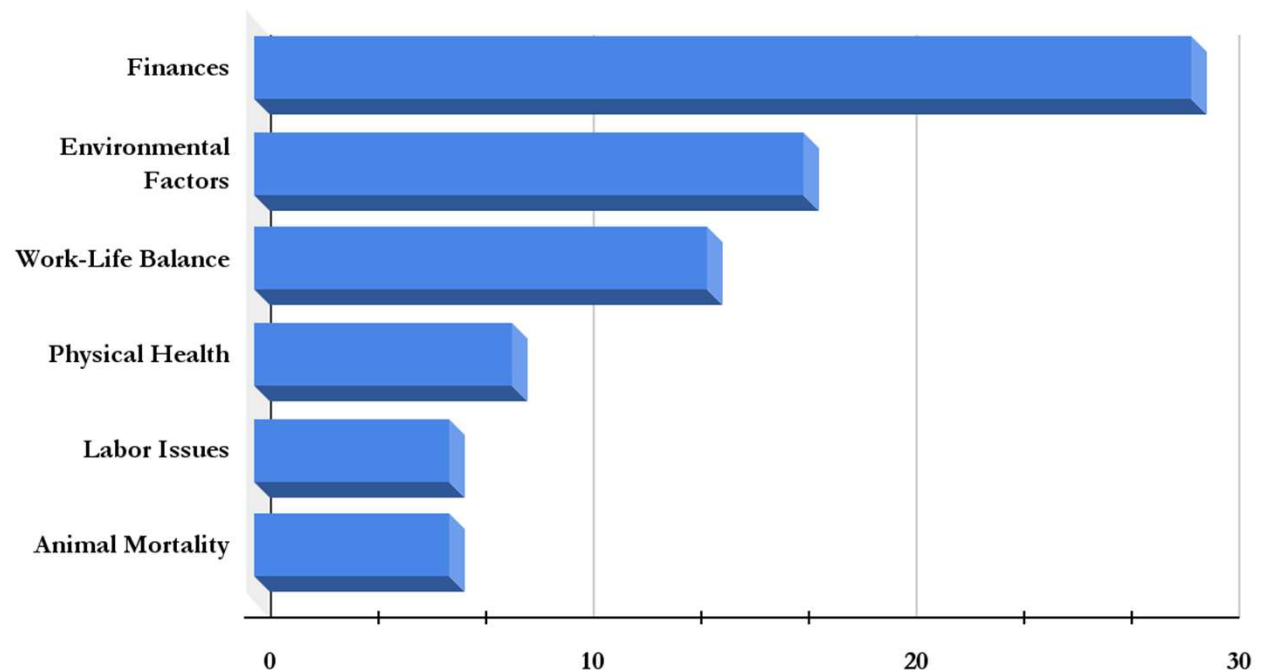
GEORGIA
RRT Food & Feed Rapid
Response Team

Part I: Sources of Stress

"That year that all that happened [drought], it stressed me out pretty bad to the point where I had to go to the doctor to take some medication because I was losing my mind. I hadn't really seen anything stress related other than that"

"when they get sick and die- all the chickens and then you've still got bills to pay, even though you know, there's not a whole lot of money coming in? So that's that. And then just I mean, when things tear up and, you know, it's constantly something every single day, it feels like."

Sources of Stress



UGA Farming Research
Noah Hopkins, MPH; Dr. Christina Proctor, MPH, PhD



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA
College of Public Health



UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
EXTENSION



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA
School of Social Work

Barriers to Seeking Care

Themes	Concepts	Quotes
Cultural Norms in Farming Community	● Pride ● Male-centered ● Privacy/Anonymity	"That's kind of how I look at it. Just suck it up and get over yourself, type deal. I don't think it makes you less of a man by talking about it. I'm just not going to go out and start talking about what is going on." "My doctor, look, I go to church with him. you see him out and I know doctor patient confidentiality and everything but.... almost like maybe I'm going to go to a doctor outside my local county, that way I don't have to see them out and about in town"
Normative Beliefs	● Self-Reliance ● Resilience	"I'm comfortable talking to y'all about it but I wouldn't spend my hard-earned cash to talk to a therapist about it" "In a way it feels like a flaw that you have that I can't deal with something I'm supposed to be able to deal with."
Stigma	● Public Stigma ● Self-Stigma	"I guess like, yeah if word gets out that you're going to get help or whatever people will talk"
Formal Healthcare Challenges	● Physical distance ● Low resources ● Disconnect from PCP ● Insurance concerns ● Accessibility of mental health care services	"Good luck getting a good insurance because you are self-employed" "We're 30 minutes, 40 minutes from the nearest hospital? In all honesty, they ain't that great of ones that far, and it's kind of one of those things." "Going back to medical stuff....for us to do much of anything is a drive to Athens or Gainesville"

What Are the Barriers to You Seeking Care?



Prevention and Support for Farmers

Overall, the key elements identified to reduce farmers' reluctance to discuss stress and mental health were:



Using clear, concise messaging



Incorporating mental health into a more holistic conversation about health and well-being



Making information accessible through frequently used avenues (i.e. farming publications, newsletters, blogs, podcasts, social media)



Tailoring messaging to reiterate farmers are not alone in their struggles



Targeting a broader audience and those who care about farmer wellbeing (i.e. farm spouses, Cooperative Extension agents)



What Can We Do To Integrate Wellness Into Our Work Lives?

Share the Strategies You Utilize
at Your Workplace



What Can We Do To Integrate Wellness Into Our Personal Lives?

Share the Strategies You Utilize for Wellness

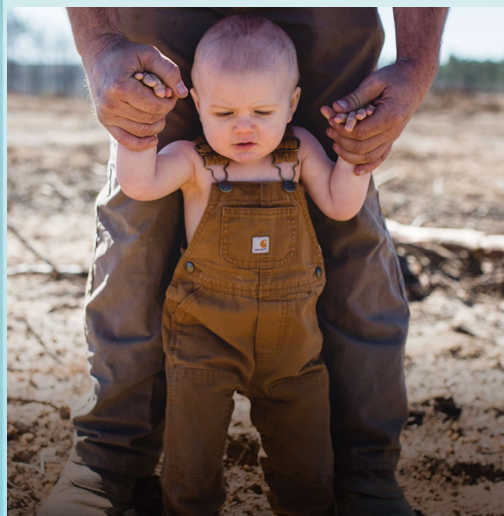


Awareness

Balance

Connections

ABCs
of
Agricultural
Wellness



Find balance.
Need help? Call GCAL: [1-800-715-4225](tel:1-800-715-4225)



**Seek help
when you need it.**
Need help? Call GCAL: [1-800-715-4225](tel:1-800-715-4225)



**Connect
with family and friends.**
Need help? Call GCAL: [1-800-715-4225](tel:1-800-715-4225)

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE

There is hope.



You check in on the family, friends, and the farm.
**When is the last time you
checked in with yourself?**
Need help? Call GCAL: [1-800-715-4225](tel:1-800-715-4225)

Importance of Self Care

Self Care Habits

- Eat healthy, set time for some physical exercise and be kind to themselves
- Engage in proper sleep habits
- Seek quality social support
- Schedule meaningful activities
- Set realistic goals and expectations and practice flexibility when circumstances change
- Keep a sense of humor
- Focus on balancing work and personal life.

Emotional Self Care

- Must set healthy personal and emotional boundaries in terms of what works for them and what doesn't and only take on what they feel they can handle.
- It's important to keep in mind that emotional boundaries will likely change over time

From: *20 Warning Signs of Compassion Fatigue*
<https://www.thesafetymag.com/ca/news/opinion/20-warning-signs-of-compassion-fatigue/187493>

"Glimmers are experiences, interactions or resources that help us feel safe, connected, present or settled."

Therapy with Abby: <https://www.therapywithabby.co.uk>

RECOGNIZE & SHARE GLIMMERS TO GROW

- ✓ **The sun on your face**
- ✓ **Comforting words from a friend**
- ✓ **Listening to music**
- ✓ **Cuddle with a pet**

Set a Glimmer Intention!
Start a Glimmer Journal
Begin Glimmer Journey



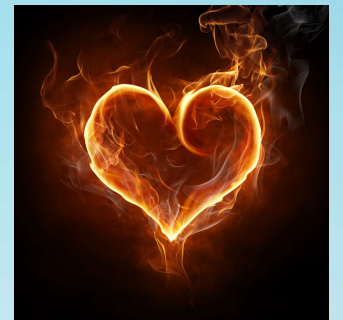
Listening to
someone for
8 minutes
-Simon Sinek



Dedicating just eight minutes of focused, attentive listening to someone can significantly impact their well-being and foster deeper connections, often signifying a simple yet powerful act of support and presence by truly being there for another person

Have You Shared Any Resources or
Information with those in your circle?

START TODAY!!!



Spark a light in
someone else.

Resources

Be the lifeline.



<https://988ga.org/resource/988-materials-for-the-georgia-farming-amp-agricultural-community>





Powered by the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center
at Mercer University School of Medicine

Alliance Mission:

Foster networks of well-being in Georgia agricultural communities through collaboration, education, research, and advocacy.

Alliance Vision:

We envision a thriving, healthy, and safe agricultural community in Georgia.

FOUNDING ALLIANCE



Georgia
Department of
Behavioral Health
& Developmental
Disabilities



GEORGIA
FOUNDATION
FOR AGRICULTURE



UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
EXTENSION

<https://gafarmstress.org/>

COMET: How to Start Conversations



Conversation Starter Guide:

- You don't seem yourself lately.
- How are you? No, really. How are you?
- I've noticed you haven't... [been at coffee, at the football games, at the club]. OR I've noticed you seem... [stressed, sad, distracted] lately.
- How are things at home/work/school/with your friends?
- Can we get coffee sometime soon and talk? Can I call you sometime?
- You know, ____ happened to me a few years ago. I hear you. For me, it was ____.
- How can I help you? I think we should call ____ for help, OK?

Resources:

- Your primary care doctor or nurse
- Your pastor or church
- 988 Suicide and Crisis Line
- <https://988ga.org/>

OTHER RESOURCES:

- <https://www.agr.georgia.gov/mental-health-agriculture>
- <https://extension.uga.edu/topic-areas/timely-topics/Rural.html>
- <https://www.agrisafe.org/healthcare/mental-health/>



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Thanks for Your Thoughtful Engagement!