FEELING DOWN ON THE FARM
MENTAL HEALTH IN RURAL WAIRARAPA / TARARUA

Inside
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• Expert Advice
• Support Networks
Acknowledgements

By Neil McLaren

The East Coast Rural Support Trust regions of Wairarapa and Tararua have seen a need to promote the mental health and wellbeing of our rural communities, so have co-ordinated a team to run a 12 month campaign. The team consists of Jane Mills, Suicide Prevention Co-ordinator, Regional Public Health, Corinne Oliver, Like Minds Like Mine; Matt Mood, RABO Bank; Sarah Doyle, Clinical Psychologist; Steve Thomson, Farmer/Minister; Margaret Wheatstone, Farmer; Jamie Falloon, Fed Farmers; David Marsh, Bill Wallace and myself, Neil McLaren, East Coast Rural Support. This publication will be the main focus of the campaign and has been inspired by previous helpful publications in Southland and Taranaki. The purpose is to inform farmers, their families and their communities that there is support out there, and it is OK to ask for help. There are family, friends, neighbours and professional people who care and who can help when you feel stressed, depressed, are suffering from grief and cannot find a way through your problems.

By Roly Ellis

As the Mayor of Tararua – a district which relies heavily on a rural base for so many of our families and relevant businesses - I welcome a publication of this sort. It is so important that rural families are aware of the problems that we all encounter in our everyday working environment, which brings about mental stress on both partners and children. As a farmer it is often too difficult to admit we are in shut down mode and cannot see the wood for the trees. It is at times like this we need to find help and maybe that the other half or a good friend or neighbour spots the signs and help is found. While sitting around a coffee table or standing in a woolshed, during my three-years as the Drought Relief Co-ordinator, many problems were communicated to me. Families realised it was in confidence and often a good outpouring of “Troubles at Mill” was enough to help out. However where I felt that some sort of sensible help could be found, I indicated where that could be found. We are all proud people, but it is better to find that help before it is too late.

I truly recommend that you read this publication, if not to help yourself then to possibly help others.

Roly Ellis
Mayor
Tararua District Council
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Ron Mark

The nature of rural people is hardy, stoic and willing to do things physically and mentally that most other people wouldn’t do,” says Carterton District Council mayor, Ron Mark. “Getting up in the early hours to go out in the worst of the weather, to deal with all manner of things outside their control like climate, financial markets and changing government policies, can add huge stresses to the lives of a farming couple,” he says. “The type of person who will take on these challenges is usually strong, proud and independent so it is not uncommon for rural families to be so stressed that they are not able to recognise it. It’s in those times they need family, friends and neighbours to recognise it for them and get the help they need - even if they don’t think they want or need it.

“Having to admit they can’t handle something, is naturally difficult for these ordinarily strong people. But failure to do so could be disastrous.

“I encourage everyone to know your neighbours, to be observant, be alert to changes, read this publication and become knowledgeable about the signs and symptoms of stress and where services can be accessed from. As tough as it might be, support your neighbours by encouraging them to get help, or get help for them if they are not in a position to do so themselves.

“Observe, ask, follow through – failure to do so may cost a life.”
As farmers we are very good at looking after environmental and animal health, but we don’t always worry about our own health," says Wairarapa Federated Farmers Provincial President, Jamie Falloon.

"The farming industry is very isolated, we operate with a lot of issues outside our control – weather, politics etc. It is easy for things to get on top of us quickly – if something goes wrong it can be pretty dire," he says.

The farming industry has an unequivocal record of deaths related to mental health issues – but it doesn’t have to be this way. Don’t leave it to someone else, look out for your family, mates and neighbours. Recognise problems can occur not only with farmers but with their family members as well. Let’s all look out for each other and it will make a difference!"

"It’s not that hard – as well as talking about lambing percentages and grass growth we need to ask each other how we are – AND IMPORTANTLY take time to listen to the answer. Provide an opportunity for others to tell you that things are tough. Put answers together with body language and what you know of the person and if you think something is out of the ordinary give them further encouragement to speak up. If they need help, help them find it.

"Keep this publication as a reference in case you or your mates ever need it – it contains plenty of advice and places to go for help.

“Fellow farmers, talk to people about how you are feeling, ask people how they are feeling, listen to the answers and offer support to each. Together we can make a difference.”

A Burden Shared is a Burden Halved

The dark, damp, dull days of winter are passing, the days are getting longer and things should be looking brighter moving into spring," says Anders Crofoot, National Vice President of Federated Farmers NZ.

"But, for some of us things may not be looking brighter," says the former New Yorker with a background in funds analysis who now farms the iconic hill country Castlepoint Station. "Farming is a challenging business and sometimes the demands can go from being stimulating to getting on top of you in an insidious way that’s often hard to notice. If it seems like a long hard slog with no end in sight and you are not having fun anymore then it is time to change something.

“A change might be taking a break and getting off farm. Or it may be having a chat with your neighbour or an advisor – there is a lot of truth to the old adage that a burden shared is a burden halved.

That first step may lead onto other steps, which can make a change for the better. Doing the same thing and expecting a different outcome will not work. Some changes can be small, others large, but the important thing is to recognise that you should not be feeling hopeless day after day and there are things that you can do to get out of those dull, dreary days and move into spring”

Look for Signs and Activate Support

"Our men are at risk - the rural sector has a disproportionate number of suicides compared to urban populations. The incidence of suicide among young Maori men is very high and this group of our community is particularly at risk. Farming is a great leveller - many things beyond our control mean it is easy for the most well rounded person to suffer stress, anxiety and depression.

"I encourage everyone in our rural community to look out for each other – if you see someone looking down, or just acting differently, take action. Give them time and a place to have a discussion. Sit down and talk, go to town for dinner or have friends round. Farming is very isolating, in particular for Maori who are often not involved in traditional rural networks. The more social support we can provide the better off everyone will be.

"When things get tough within the business, it’s always better to engage early with advisers and banks. Don’t ignore signs of problems, if you wait till everything is backed up then there can be too much pressure. Take the pressure off, talk to your mate and address the issues early.”

What is Stress?

A simple definition of stress is…

The body’s reaction to things that happen to you.

Stress can be both positive and negative.

Positive stress can be an enabler.

Bad stress (distress) is when events make us feel uncomfortable and not in control.

The danger lies in too much stress over a long time.

What are the warning signs?

Your Body:

• Breathing problems
• Chest tightness
• Upset stomach e.g. nausea, diarrhoea, constipation
• Tension, aches and pains
• Headaches
• Fatigue
• Feeling wired- unable to relax
• Lower immunity, inclined to catch any little bug going around and take longer to recover.
• Altered sex drive or alternatively increased need for sex as a release.

Your Mind:

• Thinking feels sped up and thoughts are intrusive.
• Difficulty making decisions
• Forgetfulness
• Poor concentration
• Poor problem solving
• Easily distracted

Your Emotions:

• Worrying excessively (similar to anxiety).
• Feeling most overwhelmed, stuck or trapped.
• “Short fuse” - sudden bursts of anger and irritability often at small issues.
• Tearfulness
• Feeling down
• Loneliness
• Loss of motivation and enjoyment

Your Actions & Behaviour:

• Sleeping problems e.g. can’t get to sleep or wake up thinking about farm tasks.
• Poor eating
• May become withdrawn - failing to share daily goals with partner and staff, shutting off from community events and socialisation.
• Alcohol, tobacco and caffeine use may increase
• Become reactive rather than proactive
• Avoiding situations or issues e.g. not returning phone calls or opening invoices
• Delaying demanding tasks e.g. dagging sheep.

Q&A
**Farming and Stress**

**Sarah Donaldson**

**Stress - What is it?**

Essentially stress is when demands or pressures outweigh our ability to deal with them. It results physically to having a higher arousal level in our body. Not all stress is bad. We need some arousal for our bodies to get up and going, to get things done and achieve all we want. However, too much stress for too long and your body and mind start to have difficulty. You need recovery periods, to come down off that stress peak when you have been through a particularly demanding period. Recovery helps sustain your performance, energy levels and stay well. At its best, stress provides the fuel for motivation and achievement, at its worst, sustained periods can lead to burn out, anxiety and depression.

**What Helps?**

**Prioritise Demands**

Try to focus on just your main 2-3 problems - leave the others to come back to. Often by the time you do, they are not such a big deal because you are feeling more in control. The priorities may be organising more feed for stock, and getting the overdraft sorted. But be realistic in your expectations. Don't set yourself up to feel worse by setting unachievable goals.

**Change Your Way of Thinking**

It is good to ask yourself the question 'what can I control and change to help?' - This means you can focus on achievable tasks. There is no point wasting your energy on factors you cannot change like the weather because it won't achieve or change anything except to wind you up more.

A crucial factor in managing stress is becoming aware of what you are saying to yourself. Change negative thoughts into more realistic or helpful thoughts e.g. "It's not looking like the best forecast for this season, but we've had worse and we'll get through it again." By focusing on what is going well, how you or others have coped before in similar situations you can stay more optimistic, in control and motivated with tasks at hand.

**Take the initiative again**

Once the main problems are identified take the initiative. It might be approaching the bank manager before he/she approaches you. Talking to them about what you see the options are, can be far more empowering and positive than retreating from it and hoping it will all go away. Remember there are always choices and options no matter how hard it gets.

**Physical Stuff**

When we are very busy or stressed we often forget to eat well but this is essential to stay well. At its best, stress is when it is under higher demands. Likewise keeping a regular routine for sleep. If your arousal level is still high at night you will need a good period to wind down before your body will be ready to sleep. So keep this time relaxing - don't do farm budgets then! Limit caffeine and alcohol as this makes this pattern worse. Exercise is a great stress release. Of course if you have been bustling by foot or dagging all day you won't need extra physical exercise, rather some relaxing downtime.

Long periods of tension can also mean breathing becomes shallower causing lots of physical symptoms due to the change in CO2 in the body. There is scientific value in breathing exercises - they are not simply some 'warm fuzzy carry on'.

**Get some time away**

Getting that recovery period can be difficult when work and home life are closely entwined. At less busy times prioritise time to participate in activities such as kids' sports days or visiting friends/family. It's a matter of making the most of these opportunities and prioritising your health and relationships not just the farm. If you find you can relax and unwind at home that is great. But often there are too many triggers or ongoing jobs around you that will not allow you to get your mind off the job. Plenty of farmers' partners will groan inwardly when their farming partner says he/she will just "shoot out" to do that "little job" on his/her elusory day off. In addition for farmers on their own they can become quite isolated with little distraction from stressful thoughts or opportunities for good times. Getting away as hard as that can be, is a big help for staying well personally and keeping positive relationships.

**Have a Yarn**

Getting some perspective back on what the real issues are is helpful. By conceding that you are finding farming life challenging doesn't make you a bad farmer just a realistic one who can acknowledge your limits. Choose people who are constructive and good listeners. Support in the rural communities is amazing - and as long as people know you need a hand. And remember what goes around comes around. If the neighbour helps you out chances are you get to help them back in some other way.

Partners (or dogs) can suffer the brunt of a stressed out farmer. However two heads can be better than one especially if the other partner may have a positive angle or be slightly more removed and less jaded in their perspective.

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**Farming in the 21st Century**

"Farming in the 21st Century is very different to the old days when the pace of life was a lot slower and there was less pressure to perform," says farmer Barry Kempton whose farming partner were the original settlers of Greytown.

"Don't get me wrong, being a farmer has never been easy," he says. "Previous generations had two world wars and a couple of depressions to cope with, these events were certainly traumatic for them to deal with."

"All farmers have financial pressure to a greater or lesser extent to cope with. A young person starting off buying a farm and taking on a huge mortgage has to back to the wall for a number of years to make headway in reducing their debt." Prior to the 1980s farming was very much a family affair, the husband and wife were always there. In many cases, particularly on dairy farms mum and the kids were regular helpers, (especially after school and in the school holidays) when the whole family helped with shearing, lambing, docking and feeding calves etc.

As time went on farmers terms of trade were diminishing so farmers who in the past had made a good living needed a bigger farm or run more stock to keep the same standard of living.

This added to more animal health issues and more debt so by now many farmers were on a precarious path that was compounded by the economic reforms of the mid 80s.

For the first time many wives went off farm to work, some farmers worked their farms on weekends while they had another job off farm. Gone were the days of farming for a lifestyle, in many cases it was a battle for economic survival.

Farmers in many cases became isolated, they didn't have their spouse to talk to over lunch time to chew over the day's problems or just have a yarn, the visits from stock firm travellers became almost nil in some areas. Many farmers who had previously employed staff were trying to cope with minimal help so not only the physical pressures took their toll but the lack of social interaction isolated many as did the closing of many small country schools and losing some country services such as banks and post offices.

Through all this farmers had the usual droughts, floods, storms to cope with on the farm while at the same time their personal lives were sometimes turned upside down by grief following the loss of family and friends.

"We in the Wairarapa are fortunate in having The Rural Support Trust and Supporting Families Wairarapa who are only a phone call away and have helped me deal with some of these issues," says Barry.
There is a Way Through

John Harvey

Capable, durable, versatile, it could be said that farmers are the ultimate DIYers, the quintessential kiwi blokes. But in truth, farmers are human and sometimes fallible, something many find difficult to accept.

Yvonne Harvey knows first hand just how human farmers are. Her husband John, an established and successful Martinborough farmer of 40 years, was struck by a bout of depression that could have cost him his life.

Fortunately for John, he has a wife who had the presence of mind to act quickly. As soon as she had identified that there was a problem Yvonne asked for help and in doing so, set in motion the process for John to get well.

Tragically however this story is playing out a different way for many people in the rural community and farmers are needlessly dying.

"Sadly, there are a lot of blokes out there that just get told to get over it and get on with it," Yvonne says.

This harden-up approach has got to go, Yvonne says. Farmers need to be alert to each other's thoughts and feelings. Equally, farmers need to allow themselves to ask for help. "If you had been hurt in the yard or something you would go to the doctor, so why can't farmers do the same with depression."

Yvonne can clearly recall when she realised something was "not right" but can't pin-point any one trigger for the start of John's depression.

Pragmatic and sensible John had always managed to farm through tough periods but about four years ago began to question his decision making.

"I realised when things were wrong when we were working in the yards drafting one day and he was just standing there, motionless."

It coincided with John having nightmares and waking in the night in a terrible state.

"He would be terrified that the SPCA were going to come and take the sheep away, the banks were going to foreclose on us and so on."

"It was so out of character, John is always so methodical, he thinks things through - nothing spontaneous or rash so for him to be making statements like that just didn't make sense."

Yvonne took immediate action, getting John to the family doctor, and arranging a visit from the bank manager. She also contacted the Rural Support Trust, who organised a visit from a farm advisor.

"They assessed where the farm was at and basically told John what we had been telling him and that was that everything (with the farm) was the way it should be."

Looking back Yvonne says acting swiftly was critical. She considers her and John to be among the lucky ones because they are a tight team.

For the farm to work we work as a team ... when one of your team members is crook you do something about it."

But that is not necessarily the case on every farm where, although there is now a greater awareness of depression, farmers are still reluctant to ask for help.

"It is human to show your emotions, it is not a sign of weakness and if it can stop so many wonderful farmers and wonderful people in general taking their own lives it's got to be positive, doesn't it?"

Q&A

What Can You Do About Stress?

It is not possible to remove the cause of stress – learn to manage your body's reaction to stress

- Acknowledge that you are stressed and/or depressed – while we deny it we cannot act on it.
- Give yourself some breathing/thinking space.
- Start talking to someone you trust about what is distressing you.
- Discuss problems with your partner and share the load.
- Work out a plan to minimize what is stressing you the most.
- Try to find a solution to problems or conflict in your life.
- Eat well, exercise and get sufficient sleep.
- Take some time out – ideally away from the farm.
- Treat yourself – do something fun with friends/family.
- Talk to your GP; they will know options that may be of help to you.
- Take hope. You are not alone. You will get through this.

John Harvey made it through depression thanks to help from his wife Yvonne
How to Maintain Mental Wellness

Corrinne Oliver

It’s OK, to ask for help

Usually the first port of call would be to speak to your GP if you are feeling unwell. Remember that at any time you can take a support person with you. I find having someone else with me really useful, as I often don’t hear everything or remember it all after I have left the consultation. Later over a coffee we can discuss what was said ie: a counselling appointment. The Wairarapa has a “To be Heard” program for mild to moderate depression, your GP can refer you onto this.

A combination of medication and counselling may be required. I personally don’t believe medication on its own is the best avenue to becoming and maintaining wellness. Knowing “It’s OK to ask for help” can make a huge difference, there are many people who you can seek support from, a friend, whanau, GP, help-line, therapist, peer support worker, work colleague, class-mate to name a few.

As a whanau member, with loved ones who have also experienced times of mental unwellness, I know from experience it is very important to look after yourself as the caregiver. Otherwise you end up with two unwell people! So taking time out for yourself is vital to maintaining your wellbeing and theirs!

As an outside observer of someone becoming unwell, “It’s OK, to offer help”. That doesn’t mean that you know all the answers, I certainly don’t! However I would offer agencies that can support, for example, Jill, Supporting Families, whanau support worker. Jill will come to you and offer help to those who support the person who is unwell, with education, information and help connecting with other agencies as necessary.

Whether it is stress, anxiety or depression, sometimes a few agencies may be needed at the same time. At Supporting Families we believe any door is the right door, come on in to check out our resources and for information on the Like Minds, Like Mine workshops we offer to the community. Tune into Like Minds, Like Mine local radio show on Mondays 10-11am 52.7FM or go to: www.arrowfm.co.nz and listen live.

For her own mental wellbeing, Like Minds Like Mine, Co-ordinator Corrinne Oliver enjoys regular time out on her motorbike.

Kia ora, it is with much pleasure that I contribute to the first Wairarapa – Tararua publication of “Down on the farm”. While I work mainly in Wairarapa, my role as Like Minds, Like Mine coordinator with the wonderful team of presenters, sees us on the road often. I also live rurally, which I love!

I would like to share what I have found to be useful tools to help reduce my personal stress and maintain my mental wellness over the years. Tools, which have also helped others.

Sleep, is usually the first thing to go when you start to become unwell. Imagine if you lose only one hour of sleep a night for a week, that totals 7 hours! Nearly one full night of sleep, and before you know it you are feeling stressed, exhausted, unable to think clearly, or make your usual thoughtful decisions.

Connecting with whanau, friends and people in general, when you are unwell takes alot of energy and effort. When you are stressed, anxious or tired, this seems to be put in the too hard basket! When in fact, connecting is so vital to maintaining your wellness. The feeling of laughter with a good friend, nothing can beat that!

Exercise, whatever makes you feel good. One of my exercises of choice is walking, with “ma sistas” Dianne and Yvette. When I first started I couldn’t walk and talk, now we do both flat out with loads of laughter to boot! Leaving me feeling connected, loved and energised ready to take on another day. The other exercise I love is riding my motorbike with my whanau and friends, a great way of connecting with like minded people. In Wairarapa and Tararua we are truly blessed with the beautiful scenery and great venues.

Food, not just any food, but food that nurtures your soul! Makes you feel good and not hungry 30 minutes later. When you’re unwell it is easy not to eat well, ironically that is the time you should make sure you eat a balanced diet. Again sharing a meal is a great way to connect with your friends.

What are the signs and symptoms of depression?

Physical
• Changes in normal sleeping and/or eating patterns.
• Headaches and other unexplained aches and pains.
• Stomach disorders.
• Feeling tired with little energy.
• Stomach disorders.

Emotional
• Feeling down, apathetic, guilty, anxious and empty.
• Irritable, pessimistic, angry, irritable, pessimistic, angry,
• Diminished interest in, and enjoyment of, previously enjoyed activities.
• Feeling hopeless, helpless and worthless.
• Thoughts of death and/or suicide.

Behavioural
• Diminished interest in, and enjoyment of, previously enjoyed activities.
• Difficulty in concentrating, making decisions and doing things that need doing.
• Mood swings.
• Alcohol and/or drug misuse.

What are the risk factors?
• Family and personal history of mood disorders.
• Misuse of drugs or alcohol.
• Chronic health problems such as cancer or heart disease.
• Separation or divorce.
• Major life changes.
• Work stress.
• Retirement.
• Unemployment.
• Financial Difficulties.
• Suicide.

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• Suicide.

If some or all of the above go on for more than two weeks – seek help.

For her own mental wellbeing, Like Minds Like Mine, Co-ordinator Corrinne Oliver enjoys regular time out on her motorbike.

“I made myself busy on the farm 22 hours a day because I didn’t want to be around people.”

Hamish
Farmer, Te Awamutu

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Getting through Financial Stress

Financial pressure is a real issue for many farmers. The best way to get through it is to talk, says founder and director of Masterton based farm accountants, RURAL CA Ltd, Lawrence Field.

“Stress from low returns, a poor season, high debt levels or overspending can only build and lead to more stress, lack of sleep or becoming isolated. Often fresh eyes from a friend, accountant, or consultant will open up options that are hard to see from an isolated perspective,” he says.

“Financial pressure can occur for a number of reasons including poor productive performance, low product prices, high debt levels, overspending or just poor financial management. It can cause depression or high stress. Having access to sound financial help is crucial to recovery,”

Murdock who has spent 30 years in banking, has strong links with the rural community and understands the stresses of rural living – not only does he originally hail from an Ashburton farm, he still holds shares in a Balclutha farm. He says that proactively seeking help is important. Procrastination can be costly and lead to unnecessary stress. Yet in the vast majority of cases, help is not proactively sought by the individual affected and it becomes up to someone else – a partner, a friend or associated professional to step in and guide the situation. “At this point it is important to establish a clear picture of the business’ financial position from both a short and longer term perspective, with the objective being the development of plans and priorities to address both short and longer term issues,” he says.

“If the financial position is fundamentally sound and the financial pressures are an outcome of the farmer not functioning effectively due to being mentally unwell, then the solution should be as simple as having someone else take control of the finances over the recovery period.

“If the depression has been caused by the farmer’s inability to see a future due to structural financial problems such as too much debt or insufficient cash flow, then the solutions are more complex and need to involve all stakeholders. These should include the farmer, their partner, their professionals (lawyer, accountant and farm consultant), financiers and in some instances major creditors.

“The core objective for everyone involved is to create a plan for the recovery of the business, or if this is not possible, the orderly and dignified sale of the business. Realism, honesty, respect and long term sustainability are critical aspects of this process and whilst the sale of the business is a last resort, sometimes just seeing an end to the stressful situation, or regaining control through an agreed plan, can lift a huge weight from the individual’s shoulders.”

“It’s important to remember that in many cases financial problems are caused by factors outside the control of the farmer. Being ‘staunch’ is no way to deal with it, talking about concerns and worries with others is the best way of finding solutions.

“The East Coast Rural Support Trust provides independent and confidential assistance. There are many other people who can provide help. If you see friends or colleagues under stress and struggling don’t be afraid to approach them, have those difficult conversations and help them to get through it,” he says.

He keeps healthy with regular exercise, open communication with friends and family, plenty of sleep, and time away from work.

“Pride and worrying about how other people may see us, often stops us from admitting mistakes or problems. Financial pressure is nothing to be ashamed of, with the most successful entrepreneurs having been through a failure or two! Our partners and children will still love us (and maybe love us more) if we own up to our problems or medications causing your depression.

Our healthcare professional can help you get the right treatment for you.

• Medication may help.
• Professional mental health support from a counsellor or psychologist may also help.

Discuss this option with your GP.

• Take time to learn about depression.
• Learn to watch out for your particular symptoms and triggers and how best to manage these.
• Keep reading, keep learning, keep informed and try to remain positive about getting through your depression.

www.depression.org.nz/rural
0800 111 757

O&A

How do I reduce feelings of depression?

• Try to tell someone how you are feeling.
• Talk your worries over with someone whose opinion you trust.
• Take some breathing space so you have time to start sorting out what is stressing you.
• Try to adopt a more positive attitude. You can’t control all the things that happen to you but you can control how you react to them.
• Identify what you can change to ease your depression and accept what you cannot change.
• Limit your expectations and set goals that can be achieved.
• Value your ‘real’ treasure: family,whanau, friends, health, achievements – these are what count.
• Take a break – step out of your normal routine for a few hours or days.
• Try to look after yourself: eat and drink sensibly and get enough sleep.

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Where do I go to get help if I am depressed?

If you think you may be/are depressed, the best place to start is discussing this with your doctor or health professional. Ask for a check up to see if there are physical problems or medications causing your depression. Your healthcare professional can help you get the right treatment for you.

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Getting the Right Help

Choosing a doctor or therapist

- If you are happy with your GP – stick with them.
- If you are not happy with your GP or you don’t have a GP – the best thing to do is ask around your family and friends to see who they recommend.
- Ideally your GP will recommend a suitable practicing therapist who will meet your needs.

Here are some questions you might like to ask a prospective mental health professional:

- Call the prospective therapist and ask:
  - What training and experience do they have?
  - What references do they have?
  - How long are the sessions?
  - How many sessions do they average per client?

How can I work out if a doctor or therapist is right for me?

Choosing the right doctor and/or therapist can be difficult – but it is important you find one who will best fit your needs. Some things you might like to consider are:

- Do they have a manner you feel comfortable with?
- Do you feel confident about them as a person and as a practitioner?
- Do they listen to what you have to say?
- Do they ask you questions?
- Are they caring and empathic?

If you feel the practitioner you have selected or are recommended is not compatible – you have the right to choose another person or service.

If you feel your GP or therapist has been particularly helpful – recommend them to others.

Confidentiality - How it works

It is vital in any medical or therapeutic relationship that the person seeking help trusts that what they are discussing is private and confidential. This is often a particular concern for people living in a small or rural community. Health professionals are bound by their profession’s code of ethics to maintain client confidentiality.

This should be discussed at the start of contact so boundaries can be clearly set out and agreed upon. As a general rule health professionals have to gain client’s consent to disclose information about them to anyone else even their GP or spouse, although often it is in the client’s best interests if this communication can occur.

There are limits to confidentiality. If a health professional is concerned that someone’s safety is at risk, they need to act on this to prevent harm to anyone.

In a small community there is always the issue of running into each other in other social contexts. This can be addressed during the first consultation by agreeing how situations will be handled should they arise – for example, agree to no acknowledgement, a nod and smile or full acknowledgment.

Where possible it is usually better to see a health professional who isn’t personally known, so the relationships don’t get muddled.

Feeling down? Your Doctor can help

GP can help those feeling low or suffering from depression by providing the right support, and make contact with the right services quickly to ensure the person is on the road to recovery as soon as possible.

When making an appointment with your doctor, it is recommended to book a longer appointment to allow enough time to talk through what is going on. Many people find it helpful to talk along someone they trust for extra support during and after the appointment.

Depending on personal needs, the GP may want to refer to another mental health specialist. This referral would be completely confidential, and would ensure the best possible support and care.

Depression is common, and not talked about enough. Your doctor can support you and your loved ones to get back on the road to recovery. If you have any concerns about depression, or have any of the symptoms listed in this publication, talk to your doctor, they are here to help.

- Carterton Medical Centre

Q&A

How do I find a counsellor and/or doctor?

Choosing a doctor or therapist

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If you feel the practitioner you have selected or are recommended is not compatible – you have the right to choose another person or service.

If you feel your GP or therapist has been particularly helpful – recommend them to others.

This is a good place to seek help and advice when symptoms of stress, anxiety or depression are ongoing, getting worse or affecting everyday life.

“They can help you work out what your main concerns are and guide you on the next step to getting through,” says Clinical Psychologist, Sarah Donaldson.

“Just like any other illness, sometimes we need medication as a valuable (often temporary), option to provide some relief from symptoms. Your GP can work out if medication is right for you,” she says. “Even supplements can help boost vitality and ability to cope.

Farmers spend thousands every year on drenching their stock, and the occasional ‘drench’ of vitamins like Omega 3, iron or B12, can make a big difference to immunity and energy levels.”

However Donaldson says it is important you find keep supplements through a GP rather than randomly picking up any old multivitamin, as blood tests can help identify any deficits.

“GP’s are also great at knowing what other professionals may be helpful for addressing emotional health. There are lots of different services and people in the ‘helping profession’ and it can be very confusing to work out who to go to.

The local District Health Board (DHB) incorporates both The Community Mental Health Service (adults) and the Child, Adolescent Mental Health Service (young people and families). These two teams run an after hours crisis service which is available 24 hrs for urgent or critical help by phoning 0508 432 432 Wairarapa, 0800 653 357 Tararua.

Compass Health provides a programme called ‘To be Heard’ which GP’s can access for patients when short term support for emotional health issues is required.

There are a wide range of individual professions in the public and private sector, who provide assistance, including clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, counsellors, psychotherapists, social workers, nurses and more.

Clinical psychologists who are people who have received training in the diagnosis and psychological treatment of mental health issues, often use specific strategies or interventions as well as talking through issues. Psychiatrists are doctors who have specialised training in mental health but can also prescribe medication. Counsellors may offer general guidance or may have specialised training in a certain area, for example abuse, grief or relationships. Psychotherapists also specialise in personal and mental health issues with an emphasis on using the therapeutic relationship to aid recovery. In addition there are many other professionals who work in this area such as Social Workers, Nurses, Occupational Therapist etc.

Because it is confusing, a GP will have a good idea about what services and professionals are available in the local area and can suggest those which may be most suitable for a particular need.

“Remember, recovery does not happen instantly in one session so rather than write it off as a ‘waste of time’, give the process a chance,” Donaldson says. “If the ‘fit’ does not feel right, this may not be the right person or approach for you – and it is OK to choose to try another provider.”

Sarah Donaldson, Clinical Psychologist at work on her own farm.
The Way Through is to Admit Problems and Seek Help!

Going it Alone is Not The Way!

Vince Monk

Dairying has been Vince Monk’s life. Most of it spent in the Wairarapa on his family’s farm. Vince’s parents experienced many difficult years, but they always had family and a great neighbourhood community to help them through. As most rural people do, they showed a stoicism to close ranks and get on with it. As a child Vinnie knew nothing of difficult times as he was mostly shielded from them by his loving parents.

As an adult, Vince and his late wife Faye did the same with their children, through the weather and financially driven difficult years.

“Going it alone is not the way…we like to share the good times when on a high, though harder, it is even more important to share relate to those closest as life deals a bad hand.”

On top of suicide, Vince has had to deal with even more tragedy – as Faye was diagnosed with cancer in 2009. Over three years they lived with cancer hanging over them – especially the hope that they would beat it.

“I can see the hope generated by the dedicated medical teams, as with any medical condition, even cancer, there is hope of a cure. You do what needs be done and get on with life,” he says.

After a short respite, the cancer was diagnosed again and this brought with it what Vince describes as “a real sense of failure”. Months later, this lead to grief, when told nothing else could be done. “From this point, we felt all hope being whittled away. During this time, we had each other and close family – it was not a topic for discussion really, while living and praying in hope, deep down you know where this is going to end.”

With any tragic or traumatic event, there comes first a sense of the unreal; it’s when this wears off we become vulnerable to depression – despair etc. Unfortunately these can drive us inward at the time when we should be talking openly to those closest to us, our relationships are Number One, two and three etc. This includes family, business partners, friends and professionals.”

Two months after the first anniversary of his wife’s death, Vince “crashed and nearly burned!” He remembers clearly thinking, “OMG, another year to live through.” This led to two bouts of what he describes as “hopelessness and physical inertia”, which he likens to seeing “the black dog” of depression. “My vivid recollection was of a black hole in which I was hanging by my fingers, and slipping…”

Following the second bout Vince rang a friend who suggested talking with a priest he knew, for help. “I was scared, but I knew I needed help from someone special. When we feel that we are ‘struggling’, it is time to pause and realign our perspective. ‘Struggling’ may sometimes be a physical condition, but it always is a state of mind,” he says.

Vince suggests for others experiencing difficulties, the appropriate therapy could be to ease the physical pressure, slow the pace, rest or reduce the workload. “Great responses, if and when available,” he says. “Regardless of whether or not we have control over the physical causes of the ‘struggle’, we always have control over how and what we think while going through the struggle,” he says.

“I have given thought to why I survived. There are three reasons, really. One was my faith in God, it was only when I gave Him back my problems, that the old me began to surface. My second was the love of my three daughters and the third friends who keep ringing for a chat. I know now how lucky I am!”

“Let us be very HONEST with ourselves EACH day: we all need help sometimes.”

Relationships are more important than other stuff…

Suicide

What are the signs that someone may be suicidal?

Warning signs may include:

- Ongoing depression and withdrawal from family and activities.
- Frequent negative comments about self eg I’m no use to anyone.
- Talking to writing or thinking about death, dying or suicide.
- Seeing no future in the future.
- Giving away previously valued possessions.
- Any unexpected interest in wills and insurance.
- Rage, anger, seeking revenge.
- Feeling trapped.
- Having feelings of hopelessness and helplessness.

The presence of warning signs does not necessarily identify when, or even if, a person will attempt suicide.

Suicide risk can vary day to day or even hour to hour.

Any thoughts, talk or writing about suicide should be taken seriously.
Life is Precious – There is Always A Way Through

“I love living – I couldn’t think about being sad now. I love life too much,” says 22-year old Jordyn Coulston.

Jordyn is studying for a Bachelor of Arts degree and looking forward to a future teaching and doing mission work overseas – but life hasn’t always been positive.

As a teen Jordyn went through severe depression, cutting herself as a cry for help and having vague suicidal thoughts in the back of her mind.

After living a happy and healthy childhood in Tinui and Rangitumau, things started to get tough at 16. When a relationship broke up, Jordyn felt bad about herself. “As a 16 year old everything was about boys and this break up made me feel I wasn’t good enough,” she says.

Her response was to spend three years drinking, doing drugs and sleeping around in an effort to fill the big empty void that was her life. “I was constantly putting on the face of being ok to the outside world, but inside I was broken and searching. I kept putting myself in harmful and dangerous situations, somehow thinking that I would find comfort – but I never did,” she says.

“I was cutting myself because I got so worked up that it was something I could do to make my mind off things. I see now it was a cry for help because I would pretend I was trying to keep it hidden, but actually I wanted someone to see and help me feel better.”

When Jordyn left school she joined the navy – something she had always wanted to do. But instead of turning her life around as she had hoped – things got worse. When she broke her pelvis in a training accident, she had to return home, causing her to hit rock bottom, feeling she had nothing - everything she had wanted was no longer possible. She didn’t want to get out of bed and couldn’t make herself do anything – “It wasn’t my pelvis, it was my mind that was broken,” she says.

“I wouldn’t discuss my feelings with anyone and I just couldn’t see beyond where I was at. It was like there was a veil over everything and I couldn’t see beyond it – while I never seriously contemplated taking my own life, I had thoughts of what would it be like if I did.”

She eventually forced herself out of bed – and back into the old life of seeking comfort in alcohol and sleeping with guys. Fortunately for Jordyn help came in the guise of an old school friend. At the pub one night he convinced her to go to his church to talk. They went – at 2am – and from there, through the help of others, things started to change. It took at least six months for Jordyn to alter the way she felt about herself and consequently the way she acted – but it happened. Her friend introduced her to other young people who talked to her, cared about her and showed her another way of life. “The milestone for me was admitting I had a problem and starting to talk about it,” Jordyn says. “I was not a christian, but it was entirely Christ who changed my life. The people at church led me to him and he did the rest,” she says.

“Recovery is about seeking out someone you can trust to talk and being really honest about what you are going through. I was lucky, I had help and now I am alive and loving life. Not everyone is so lucky.”

A 20-year-old family friend of Jordyn’s recently took his own life, something which has devastated his family and friends. “People don’t realise when they get to that low state, that there is a way through. They don’t see how final and irreversible taking their own life is, how much value there is in every life, how precious and wanted they are to others and that life can go on and be good again, even if it doesn’t feel like it at the time – I am proof of this.”

Because of what she has been through personally, and because of the death of her family friend, Jordyn wants to help young people to open up. “I encourage any young person who is feeling down to talk it through with someone they trust, before they get to a point that they feel they can’t go on. For me it was God, for others it might be their parents, a close friend, or someone independent from a service like Youthline. Everyone wants someone to listen. Often, because they don’t know how to ask for help, they will do things like drinking, cutting etc as a cry for help, when what they really want is for someone to notice and act. Parents do actually know some stuff and will love you unconditionally through times you need help, your local church will have someone who can listen and won’t judge, people who work at places like Youthline want to listen – they wouldn’t be doing it if they didn’t.”

“Life is precious, suicide is devastating for those left behind, and there is always a way through even if it doesn’t seem like it.

“Life will be worth living again!”

Jordyn Coulston (centre) graduating with a Diploma in Christian studies. Living proof that when life hits rock bottom.
Farms grow and nurture their stock to get the best from them, and they need to do the same with young employees to ensure they remain physically and mentally strong and resilient," says Dairy NZ’s Senior Consulting Officer, Wairarapa, Leo Hendrikske. Keeping young workers mentally and physically healthy is a challenge for employers especially during the busy times, like spring," he says.

Leo recommends the best way to achieve this is to sit down with employees and brainstorm the kind of workplace you all want to be part of.

Set the Ground Rules
As a team work out the key behaviours everyone needs to demonstrate on a daily basis. Possible behaviours may include:-
- Being honest and open
- Treating others with respect and understanding
- Doing the job well
- Resolving problems promptly
- Showing up on time
- Chipping in when needed
- Taking care of property and equipment
- Respecting and caring for stock

Common Ground Helps
Common Ground is a place for family, whanau and friends to help their young people in their lives enjoy positive mental health and wellbeing.

It can be difficult to help young people when they're going through challenging times. That’s where Common Ground comes in. The website features advice, conversation starters, warning signs and sources of support for a range of issues and challenges that many young people face. It aims to help worried loved ones to guide their young people in managing challenging times in their lives, so they can enjoy positive mental health and wellbeing.

The website has a great web-series, a phone line (through Youthline), and an information pack service.

www.commonground.org.nz

Game-style Tool to Combat Youth Depression
SPARX is an online game-style tool to help young people develop skills to deal with feeling down, depressed or stressed. The self-help e-therapy tool teaches young people the key skills they need to help combat depression and anxiety. It was developed by a team of researchers from the University of Auckland, and has been made available for free online.

SPARX uses proven cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) techniques in a youth-friendly game format, to teach young people how to cope with negative thoughts and feelings, and think in a more balanced way. As well as the SPARX e-therapy programme, the website also offers a mood quiz to help young people identify depression and information on where to get help. A partnership with Youthline and Lifeline has also been established to provide clinical back up support to SPARX users.

The phone line 0508 4 SPARX is staffed by professional counsellors.
https://sparx.org.nz

How Can I Help Young Staff?
- Workers under 22 years old need at least 9 hours sleep daily
- Let adolescents sleep in two to three times per week (rastered)
- Young people want a social life so make allowances for that
- Give an afternoon off on a rotational basis
- At busy times supply at least one cooked meal a day as well as snacks
- Have hot food readily available so staff can come and go at any time – do not expect them to cook for themselves if they are working long hours
- Have a shared breakfast or lunch meeting at least once a week for team building
- Outline specific dangers, risks and consequences in situations beforehand as adolescents’ brains (under 25 years) don’t fully recognise these.
- It’s a steep learning curve on your first 1-2 jobs, so be patient, provide coaching and positive feedback.

Youth Clinics
Carterton Medical Centre
159 High St
Tuesday 3 to 6 pm;
Friday 3 to 5 pm
Te Rangimarie Marae,
131 Cole St, Masterton
Monday to Friday 2 to 5 pm
Te Rangimarie Marae,
131 Cole St, Masterton
Friday 3 to 5 pm

Tararua Youth Drop In Centres
Provide support, advocacy, advice, programmes and care for young people aged 10 to 24
8 am to 5pm
25 Allardice St, Dannevirke,
Phone: (06) 376 6794
text 027 233 1566
183 Main St, Pahiatua,
Phone: (06) 374 9214
text 027 233 0059

Are you under 19? - Sexual Health is FREE at any Doctors-make appointment to see a Doctor or Nurse

Q&A
Admitting a Problem is the First Step to Well Being

David Hunt

Admitting to suffering depression is ‘one of the hardest things’ farmer David Hunt has ever done. After living through the experience – when a farmer mate did not – he has spoken out in the hope it will change the culture in rural communities and encourage others to admit when they are not coping and seek help.

“We need to do something about this culture of not admitting problems. More people take their lives through depression than road accidents, but we are not talking about it. If we don’t address the increasing numbers of rural suicides, we are letting farmers down,” David says.

His personal experience was frightening and lonely, but it was others opening up to him about their difficulties, that helped him accept he had a problem. “There is no shame in it, depression is an illness that causes a chemical imbalance in your brain, there’s no choosing what illness you get,” he says.

“As farmers, we live in isolation, we’re very independent. We’re used to solving problems on our own and keeping our problems ourselves. This has tragic consequences. Three farmers I know took their own lives in three years.”

Depression affected David to the point that he couldn’t work, he couldn’t drive and was living on three hours sleep a night. Little things became a real issue as he battled to get through each day. He says now he knows it is usually little things that push people over the edge. “Depression can be caused by a major problem, but it can equally just creep up because of a series of little things causing worries - financial problems, extreme weather or relationship breakdowns can get the ball rolling. It is usually the day-to-day things that tend to tip someone over the edge. When you are clutching at straws the little things that go wrong can feel like the end of the world. When you are miles away from a medical centre with no cellphone reception, the isolation and feeling of helplessness is tenfold.”

“The stigma around depression I didn’t want to admit I had a problem, let alone take medication.”

By the time David sought help, his original doctor had left the practice and he ended up seeing different locums, offering different advice. “I refused to take antidepressants, and it almost killed me.”

For four years David went back and forth from the farm to the medical centre, and in that time no-one recommended counselling. When he didn’t want to take medication, no-one attempted to persuade him to. In the end a combination of counseling and medication is what helped him get better.

“It’s hard to believe that with years of medical records showing the same problem with no improvement, that it wasn’t taken a bit more seriously,” he says.

At that time a farming colleague was feeling suicidal and phoned the medical centre for an emergency appointment but was turned down and told to come back the next week, because they were fully booked. He couldn’t wait and committed suicide that weekend. “It’s tragic that if there was better education around depression and suicide prevention, my colleague would have got an appointment and could be alive today,” says David.

“We need better education for medical professionals and the community as a whole – we need to look after each other.”

David acknowledges that consistency of care is difficult to achieve when the under-funded rural medical centres struggle to keep their GPs and there seems to be a shortage of resources in the rural health sector to cope with the problem. But he says medical practitioners need to be aware that if a farmer is prepared to make a long drive into town, it is likely to be serious and should not be taken lightly.

“We need people in our communities to be concerned,” he says. Unfortunately, not all doctors are good at dealing with depression and sometimes a doctor simply isn’t the right fit for you. It is important to find someone you feel comfortable with. If the first option isn’t the right fit - then keep trying. Sometimes you simply cannot wait till next week – we need to look out for each other. Farmers – if you are struggling – admit it, there is no shame. Friends and family - look out for signs of people around you not coping, and really listen. Ensure they get the right help – if its not working, look somewhere else. It is important and it will not wait!!!

“If you think someone is struggling, be brave, pick up the phone, knock on the door or find someone who has a rapport with that person to help. At least you tried.”
Re-Engage in Life and You Can Build A Great Future

With a lifelong ambition to be involved with agriculture and the land fulfilled, the last thing Grassmere farmer, Doug Avery expected was “a dice with the ‘black dog’” (a metaphor for depression used by Winston Churchill).

A happy young man, born into a supportive family, Doug enjoys a good education and lived for sport as a youngster. When he left school it was to follow his dream - agriculture. Grassmere is a dry place, with 574 mls the average annual rainfall over 100 years. Doug was ready for it – or so he thought. “I had been born into dry,” he says. However nothing prepared him for what the droughts threw at him! The worst came in 1998 when the lack of reward for efforts had totally destroyed his enthusiasm. “I kept telling myself it would rain, but it did not,” he says. “I had given up belief that it would rain, but it did not,” he says. “I thought it was time to sell some more stock. I met some mercenary buyers who drove the price of stock to the basement. One time I was getting a dollar per lamb, and thanking the buyer for taking them. I lost all sense of hope, and every thread of happiness.”

Doug’s turning point came when a young CRT rep twisted his arm to attend a seminar on lucerne. He already had 50 hectares of it and didn’t feel ready for it – or so he thought. “I was ready for the battle to get back on with life.”

“I have learned that we all have two circles - one of concern - which is huge. That is all the things we worry about. Inside this is the circle of influence, a tiny little dot. I have learned to concentrate on my circle of influence. When I did this my life took off.”

Doug recommends practicing these five ways to happiness. Credit: The Blokes Book Page 14

A Maori Perspective

When mental health issues strike, there are numerous places to go for help. For rural people, living an isolated life and having never needed this type of service before, it is sometimes hard to know just where to go as the first point of call.

For those with a GP they feel comfortable with, this is always a good option – but “any door is a good door” says Jason Kerehi. “The main thing is to see someone – if they are not the right place – they will be sure to find you somewhere that is,” he says.

What is important is to seek help as early as possible, before a little thing becomes even bigger. For Maori who don’t have a GP to turn to, a good place to start would be Te Hauora Ruaanga o Wairarapa. This organisation works within a kaupapa Maori framework, however everyone – not just Maori – are welcome to use the service. Many non-Maori have found the kaupapa way suits them. They welcome those with mental health issues, their family members and friends needing support. Taking a holistic or whanau ora view of a person’s wellbeing, they help clients work their way through the system, breaking down barriers like jargon for them. When other support is needed they will put clients in touch with agencies and organisations to help them on the path to wellness. Every person and their situation is unique – this organisation has an understanding of how factors such as spiritual, mental, financial and family also impact on recovery and will discuss all these with clients to help put them in the right direction towards recovery.

“But the main thing to remember is – any door is the right door – look through this publication and choose a door that suits you. And if it turns out not to be the right fit – it’s OK to try another.”

There are Things You Can Do to Find a Way Through Depression

Sporting legend Sir John Kirwan has taken the lead in promoting mental health and managing depression....

He is now the coach for “The Journal” – a successful online management programme for New Zealanders experiencing mild to moderate depression.

The Journal teaches techniques which can be used in every day life to help manage depression. It can be accessed on www.depression.org.nz/rural.

Sir John fronts the television and online advertising campaign promoting “The Journal”. This programme has been successfully promoting mental health, demystifying mental illness and counting much of the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness. It has been particularly successful in encouraging people, particularly men, to acknowledge that it is OK to seek help.
Q&A

How can neighbours and friends help?

Family, friends and neighbours are often the best people to assist – simply because they are hopefully, closer to the person who may be under stress.

Ideally, if you are aware that your friend or family member may be having a stressful time or they seem a bit depressed then:

- Have the courage to raise your concerns with them
- Try to involve their partner or family/whanau
- Have the time available to listen carefully, in a non-judgemental manner, to their response and actions
- Listen carefully and encourage discussion and opinions
- Show you have understood what you are being told by reflecting back and acknowledging their feelings and ideas
- Try to identify the things that could be of concern to them such as financial management, animal management, relationships or health
- If necessary urge them to book a double session with GP to talk about how they are feeling. GP’s are generally able to provide appropriate medication and to refer to a counsellor
- The GP may believe the person needs a referral to the District Health Board Mental Health Service
- Always follow up with a visit or phone call as to the person’s progress. This gives you an opportunity to confirm your support.

Reaching Out – The Key to Getting Through Depression

T

inui farmer and minister Steve Thomson’s depression crippled him for months – but it was reaching out to his community that was vital in his recovery.

Government data has found that rural kiwis are very vulnerable to suicide – particularly farmers who still possess a “hard man” mentality when it comes to mental health.

When Steve bought his Tinui sheep and beef farm with a rural bank loan in 1984, it was the fulfilment of a lifelong dream. In the months that followed, life on the farm was good – but it was short lived.

Later that year the government changed and interest rates on rural loans soared. “Eventually they got as high as 27 percent and the government also cut the supplementary minimum price for sheep. So the ewes I bought at the beginning of the year for $30 were now only worth $2,” he says.

By 1985 Steve’s debt had doubled, his dream had crashed. There was so much stress.

If that was not enough in 1988 New Zealand was struck by severe drought, Steve’s farm was hit hard and he was sent “over the edge”.

His stress gave way to Winston Churchill called, a “visit from the black dog”, depression which crippled him for six long months.

“I didn't want to go anywhere or do anything. I felt I was going crazy and that they were going to come and put me in a home and lock me up for good,” he said.

However rediscovering his Christian faith and help from those around him pulled him through. Steve kept the farm and 30 years later still toils the land.

As well, since 2000 he has been vicar of the Tinui Good Shepherd Anglican Parish. His bout of depression led him to rediscove

r his childhood Christian faith, and he now min

ters to about 360 families, and works with locals who also struggle with depression and stress.

“I woke up one morning feeling pretty hopeless. My mind was complete mush. I said to my wife that I just couldn’t do it anymore,” he says. “It was at that point that I realised by admitting I had a problem, I actually could do it. I thought back to my Christian past and called the local vicar and asked if he’d come and pray for me.”

The vicar arrived — and quickly realised Steve’s problem was not a spiritual one. Fortunately for Steve he helped him to seek the right advice. “He took me to see my GP who helped me medically,” Steve says. A year on anti depressant medication improved his health, but it is not the pills, it is the people who rallied round when he needed them, who he gives the most credit for his recovery. So many people helped me out, the vicar in particular, he had been through it all before;” he said.

“The support and help from my wife and family, my GP, district nurse, counsellor, farm adviser, bank manager and lawyer got me through”. Steve also attended a stress management course where he met other “kiwi blokes” with the same struggles.

Seeking help was the significant catalyst for his recovery, but Steve understands that because of geography and feeling isolated not all kiwi farmers are as lucky.

“It is difficult for kiwi men to ask for help, but it is crucial that they do,” he says.

“I work with a lot of people in crisis, most of who haven’t sought help til the s*** hit the fan. Farmers, like me, need to realise that they do have a problem and admit there is something wrong. The sooner they can get help the better.

“Many farmers are unaware that they are not the only one going through depression – there are others out there going through the same thing. There is no shame in asking for help.”
Support Services

- East Coast Rural Support Trust
  The East Coast Rural Support Trust’s role is to facilitate support for rural people and communities during difficult personal, financial or clinical circumstances. They can assist with talking through the issues and referrals to appropriate professional help for stress, depression, mentoring, financial and farm management. The Trust helps with extreme events such as flooding, drought and snow storms. When an adverse event is declared they are able to access Government funding and support agencies to help rural individuals and communities get back on their feet. The Trust’s services are free and confidential and the coordinators will travel to where required for anyone needing assistance. They can be contacted on 0800 787 254.

- Supporting Families Wairarapa
  Jill Renata has been the Family/Whanau support worker for Supporting Families Wairarapa for eight years and considers herself privileged to have met some lovely families from the farming community. She has assisted them to understand mental illness and addiction in a family member or a friend and advocated for them as and when required. Jill offers a mobile service and is available to see families/individuals in their homes, at Supporting Families office or at a cafe. “If you just need someone to talk to, I’m there to listen,” Jill says.

- Like Minds, Like Mine (LMLM)
  It is all about hope and recovery at Like Minds Like Mine Wairarapa. LMLM operates out of a uniquely Maori base, say. While Whaiora operate from a uniquely Maori base, their services are available to all.

- Mental Health Crisis Team Process
  When a person in distress rings the Mental Health Crisis Line, the Crisis Line clinician will triage the severity of the issue then refer to the appropriate mental health service. As soon as practically possible the team nominated will then follow-up. If there is immediate risk of a person harming themselves or others, the crisis line will call police, then liaise with the local team re timing and location of an assessment for that person. Assessments generally also involve reviewing the case with a duty psychiatrist and an appropriate treatment plan is put in place to manage the person’s concerns. The Tararua Mental Health Crisis Team number is 0800 653 357. The Wairarapa Mental Health Crisis Team number is 0508 432 432

- Stopping Violence Services Wairarapa
  Stopping Violence provides anger management, violence prevention programmes, and other associated family support programmes and services. Their counsellors and facilitators are qualified and highly experienced in providing programmes and services for men, women and young people and their families where anger, violence or abuse has been an issue. They encourage and support individuals and families to develop violence free relationships that are based on respect and equality, and to model this to their children or others in their lives.

The Wairarapa Blokes Book
The Wairarapa Blokes Book is free. Almost all the services in it are free too!!! No Wairarapa male should be without a copy. About the Blokes Book The Wairarapa Blokes Book aims to make it easy for men to find relevant health and social services (acknowledging that there are many kinds of “blokes” all with a variety of health needs).

For those who have really hit the wall there are the contacts to help turn things around. Then there are specific sections to match specific needs. These include suggestions for maintaining health and wellbeing – both physical and mental, and a huge array of contacts for all manner of things from - Physical Health, Weight Loss and Exercise, to Quitting Smoking, Sleep and Snoring, and Budgeting and Making Sense of Money. There is also information and contacts for Legal Help, Volunteering, Men’s Shed, Habits and Addiction, Being a Father, Aging and more.

Published by the Wairarapa District Health Board based on and original book by the Canterbury Men’s Centre, this booklet can be read online at http://www.wairarapa.communityservices.org.nz or ordered by phoning 06 3779137

Tararua Family Services (TFS)

“Honouring our values of love, service and justice”

TFS has worked in the Tararua area for over 20 years covering the area from Norsewood down to Dannevirke and Woodville/Pahiatua/ Eketahuna.

TFS employs counsellors, social workers and social workers in schools. Their service is for parents, whanau, children and young people living in the Tararua area who may experience mental health issues, parenting issues, are experiencing abuse and/or have witnessed violence. They accept self-referrals or referrals from agencies involved with the family/whanau.

Counselling can be provided either in their Dannevirke or Woodville offices. Social workers provide support in the community.

Practice Manager: Wendy Baker
8 Ward Street, Dannevirke,
Phone 06 374 5029, email : office.tfs@wasstb.com

Whaiora Wairarapa

Whaiora is a “Place of Wellbeing”.

Whaiora offers support to those in need and their whanau. They will “walk with you along a path to wellness.” All services are face-to-face, in the client’s home or wherever it is most convenient. Kaikorin whaiora - their wellness professionals - include registered nurses, qualified social workers, educators and community health workers.

For services other than the GP service there is no cost to the client. Whaiora services are private and confidential. They support the client’s choices to improve and manage their health. “Sometimes this means working with you to make a plan to keep you on track. Information to help turn things around.

The Whaiora Team

support you to follow your plan is provided and we can help you to receive a range of other support services,” they say. While Whaiora operate from a uniquely Maori base, their services are available to all.

5 Park Street, Masterton
Phone: 06 370 1816, Toll Free: 0800 494 246
Email: tpp@whaiora.org.nz

Hours: Monday to Friday
8.30am to 5pm

The Wairarapa

Whaiora Team

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- Like Minds, Like Mine (LMLM)
  It is all about hope and recovery at Like Minds Like Mine Wairarapa. The LMLM team led by Corinne Oliver operates out of Supporting Families. “We are a great hub of resources and no two people are the same, we have each individual in the way they need to be helped,” Oliver says.

LMLM is a national, publicly funded programme aimed at reducing the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness.

Around the world, stigma and discrimination has been shown to be one of the major barriers to a person’s recovery. But changing attitudes and behaviour in society is complex, so the LMLM program works on a variety of levels. “People go away feeling uplifted and empowered,” says Oliver.

Workshops, which are open to all, are led by people with lived experience of mental illness who share their stories of hope and recovery. Upcoming workshops are planned in Greytown, Carterton, Masterton and Eketahuna.

- Mental Health Crisis Team Process
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RAIN FROM NOWHERE

poem by
Murray Harlin

His cattle didn’t get a bid, they were fairly bloody poor,
What was he going to do? He couldn’t feed them anymore,
The dams were all but dry, hay was thirteen bucks a bale,
Last month’s talk of rain was just a fairytale,
His credit had run out, no chance to pay what’s owed,
Bad thoughts ran through his head as he drove down Gully Road.
Geez, great grandad bought the place back in 1898,
Now I’m such a useless bastard, I’ll have to shut the gate.
Can’t support my wife and kids, now I’m just like dad and those before,
Cirky, Grandma kept it going while Pop fought in the war.
With depression now his master, he abandoned what was right,
There’s no place in life for failures, he’d end it all tonight.
There were still some things to do, he’d have to shoot the cattle first,
Of all the jobs he’d ever done, that would be the worst.
He’d have a shower, watch the news, then they’d all sit down for tea
Read his kids a bedtime story, watch some more TV.
Kiss his wife goodnight, say he was off   to shoot some roos
Then in a paddock far away he’d blow away the blues.
But he drove in the gate and stopped – as he always had to
Check the roadside mailbox – and found a letter from his Dad.
Now his dad was not a writer, Mum did all the cards and mail
But he knew the writing from the notebooks that he’d kept from cattle sales,
He sensed the nature of its contents, felt moisture in his eyes,
Just the fact his dad had written was enough to make him cry,
Son, I know it’s bloody tough, it’s a cruel and twisted game,
Just the fact his dad had written was enough to make him cry.
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