

COPING WITH GRIEF AFTER LOSING THE FARM

We expect to go through the grief process when someone we love passes away, but it's not always expected for other types of loss and may catch us by surprise. Farm families across the nation are suffering the loss of their farms, or at least a working farm, and are experiencing grief that may not have been expected.

Behavioral health provider and social worker at Mayo Clinic Health System Jessie Wolf says, "Even though it's often associated with death, grief can be the result of any sort of loss or major life change" (Sparks, 2014).

Grief is a natural response to loss. It is the emotional suffering we feel when something we love is gone. When families lose their farms, they experience grief. They grieve for the loss of financial security, the loss of a job, the daily routine, their personal identity and the farm-related social contacts. Many families find themselves in a low place.

You can take steps to take to help work through this process:

- **Give yourself time** - Grief truly is a process and is very personal. Dealing with grief is different for

each of us. The more significant the loss, the more intense your grief. Be patient with yourself; there is no specific time table for working through grief.

- **Accept your feelings** - Sadness, shock, fear, anger, guilt, depression and loss of purpose may be some of what you are feeling. Feelings are neither right nor wrong; they are your feelings and they may change as time passes.
- **Find support** - Family members, friends, clergy or mental health professionals can all lend support. Keeping the lines of communication open with others will help the grieving process along. Avoid isolating yourself from others.
- **Take care of yourself physically** - Your body is suffering



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along with your emotional state. Adequate rest, nutritious food and physical activity are needed and will help you cope.

- **Create a new routine** - Try a new hobby or return to a forgotten hobby, volunteer in the community and attend local events. These activities move you forward and help the healing process.
- **Listen to others concern for you** - You may not realize that you are emotionally fragile. If someone close to you starts this conversation, take it seriously. Visit your family health care provider who can help determine the next steps you need to take.
- **Support each other** - This loss affects everyone in the family in different ways. Providing guidance and comfort to others within your family is important. This is especially critical for children. Communication is key to keeping everyone healthy.

Loss and grief can feel overwhelming. Keeping communication flowing between family members, seeking support and giving yourself time to grieve will keep you looking and moving forward.



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RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Michigan State University Extension online RELAX Alternatives to Anger program:

How individuals handle their anger and stress affects people around them. The goal of RELAX: Alternatives to Anger is to help young people, parents and caregivers foster healthy relationships so they can live, learn and grow in a safe, affirming and fair environment free from violence, abuse, bullying and harassment. Youth, parents and caregivers will learn to better manage their anger and stress at home and in the workplace. To learn more about RELAX: Alternatives to Anger or register for a class, visit https://www.canr.msu.edu/alternatives_to_anger/relax_alternatives_to_anger_online.

Books:

- Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990, 2013). *Full catastrophe living*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Luskin, F., & Pelletier, K. (2005). *Stress free for good: 10 scientifically proven life skills for health and happiness*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Nhat Hanh, T. (1975, 1976). *The miracle of mindfulness*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Tutu, D., & Tutu, M. (2014). *The book of forgiving*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Williams, M. & Penman, D. (2011). *Mindfulness: An eight-week plan for finding peace in a frantic world*. New York: Rodale.

Suicide Prevention Resources:

- Crisis Text Line: Text "GO" to 741741
- Michigan Association for Suicide Prevention: 734-624-8328
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255



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REFERENCES

Sparks, D. (2014, Dec. 17). *7 steps for managing grief and loss*. Mayo Clinic. <https://newsnetwork.mayoclinic.org/discussion/7-steps-for-managing-grief-and-loss/>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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