

## LKL Safety Note

# Looking After Yourself and Building Mental Resilience

The last 12 months have been very strange, and everybody will have recognised increased anxiety, stress or emotional ups and downs at various points. It has been an unpredictable time and there have been lots of rapid changes to the way we have been instructed to live our lives.

Here's just a few examples of things we have had to cope with in 2020/21

- Lack of control & rapid change e.g., lockdown, furlough, not seeing family & friends,
- Increased anxiety around own and family's health, wellbeing, income, education etc.
- Information overload – legislation, mortality rates, government guidance
- Personal and social responsibility and doing the right thing
- Isolation of yourself, your family and friends
- Boredom – not being able to enjoy sport, arts and social activities and hobbies we previously used to.

It's important to know how to recognise the signs when you need to give yourself a break or get further help or to be able to recognise signs and symptoms in a colleague, friend or family member

Stress, anxiety and poor mental health can show itself in many ways - sometimes it's very hard to detect.

Here are some suggestions of changes in behaviour :-

- Irregular Time Keeping,
- Increasingly takes risks or ignores safety arrangements, recklessness
- Increased reliance on alcohol or drugs
- Insomnia, lack of sleep, fatigue
- Increased aches and pains
- Extremes of emotion, quick to anger or tearful, very happy or sad
- Quiet and withdrawn
- Not eating, looking after themselves, taking care of appearance

See also - **Anxiety signs** that we will all have experienced at one time or another.



**NB:-** If you are experiencing these symptoms for a long period of time - it's a sign that your mental health is under strain and it could be bad for your physical health too ,e.g. increase in blood pressure etc - make an appointment with your GP.

**We Must Be Kind to Each Other and Ourselves** -we are not super human. **It's Ok to not be OK.** The important thing is to recognise it and make some small changes to make a difference and get you back on track.

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### How can we help others and ourselves and improve mental resilience?

**You aren't alone.** - Remember that 1 in 4 people in the UK suffer from a mental illness at sometime in their lives so it is not unusual and that depression can be a common illness amongst farmers.

It's important to recognise it and get help. Often the first step can be by talking to someone.

*We agree with Charles Smith CEO of the Farming Community Network, which offers a national helpline to farming communities when he says:*

*"When it comes to important farm safety equipment, people usually think of tractor roll bars, shedding gates for livestock and high-vis clothing. But there is another piece of kit, which when used properly, is even better – the mind. It is very easy to underestimate just how important the mind is when it comes to farming. Along with the body, it is, without doubt, the best bit of kit a farmer can have."*

They have set up a great online resource – see <https://farmwell.org.uk/mental-health-2/>



Connect



Be Active



Take Notice



Keep Learning



Give

It is recognised that looking after these five areas of **Physical and Mental wellness in your life** will help your mental health and

help you build resilience to cope with life's challenges

**Connect:** Strengthening relationships with others and feeling close to and valued by others, including at work, is critical to boosting wellbeing.

Set up a time to speak to family, friends and colleagues via Whats app, Google Duo, etc Regular connections really help. LKL Regional Managers are available on the phone if you need to talk.

**Keep Learning:** Being curious and seeking out new experiences at work and in life more generally positively stimulates the brain.

During Lockdown this can be more of a challenge - but trying anything new is good e.g. try a new recipe, Get creative with your phone camera on your daily exercise. Try Sudoku, learn some new music, Do some Zoom online courses or revisit an old hobby you've not done for a while.

**Be Active:** Being physically active, including at work, improves physical health and can improve mood and wellbeing and decrease stress, depression and anxiety.

Whilst Herdsman and Farmer step count is usually pretty huge around the farm - its still important to get out into Nature and away from the farm on your days off. Take a socially distanced walk with 1 friend or colleague in the local area. Go for a run. Get on your bike. There are so many online exercise programmes available to try e.g. Hiit , Yoga or set up a home gym. Set a challenge e.g. "Couch to 5K"

**Give:** Carrying out acts of kindness, whether small or large, can increase happiness, life satisfaction and general sense of wellbeing.

Supporting people can benefit your own well being and sense of purpose. Take time to listen to a colleague over a brew. Offer to get someones shopping or send a small gift. Do someone a good turn. Try and say a kind friendly word to a friend or colleague each day.

**Take Notice:** Paying more attention to the present moment, to thoughts and feelings and to the world around, boosts our wellbeing.

Its a good time when your are outdoors to take notice of signs of spring, ancient trees and wildlife. Try meditation - practice on focusing on your body and breathing exercises. Focus on tastes of your favourite foods and why you like them.

**Regularly practicing these 5 ways to mental wellness are hugely beneficial to everyone**

**If you need to talk and need help in getting assistance – don't forget to be in touch with your Regional Manager.**

If you want to know other organisations that can provide support – Check out our Mental Health information resources [here](#) on our website

<https://www.lklservices.co.uk/health-safety/mental-health-helplines>

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