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Don't rush death or taxes

From 1999 to 2018, suicide rates increased 35% in the United States. In 2018, there were higher suicide rates in rural areas compared to urban areas. The available evidence about agricultural producers' mental health generally demonstrates that producers have higher psychological distress, depression and anxiety than the general population. This isn't a surprise to producers and those involved in ag industries. The list of factors working against mental peace is huge: uncertain weather conditions, market prices, government regulations, extreme climatic events, isolation from friends and family, death and suffering of animals, ever-changing technology, property values, distressed relationships, pesticide exposure, additional off-farm job, financial strain, masculinity (obeying masculine social norms), escalating health problems, access to lethal means, duty to past generations, losing something of sentimental value, ineffective coping mechanisms, and lack of service availability. Whew, that's enough to cause anyone's blood pressure to rise!

South Dakota University and University of Illinois recently teamed up, surveying farmers in the Midwestern US. The only factor that emerged as having a significant relationship with the suicide risk score was *coping through self-blame*. While suicidality is often considered the outcome of mental illness, their findings do not suggest that suicide risk among farmers is related to mental *illness*, and a further examination of self-blame as a coping strategy is called for.

Suicide is a preventable crisis. Every person knows someone that has either attempted or completed suicide. Recognizing the signs of struggle is an important first step. On many occasions, a change in behavior or lack of interest in things they typically enjoy are key indicators. Someone who is struggling may also be anxious or worried, even giving personal items away. They may mention they are unhappy, seem quieter than usual, sleeping more than normal, or having sleep issues. They may talk about wanting to die, that life would be better off without them or saying they want it all to end.

Whether this is for you, or for someone you know, knowing ways to get help are so important. Asking a friend or loved one about suicide will NOT put the thought into their head or increase their risk of dying by suicide. If you, or someone you know, has mentioned or is experiencing suicidal thoughts or behaviors and need assistance, use the National Crisis and Suicide Hotline at 9-8-8. You can use this number to call or text and the hotline is staffed 24/7 by a real person. You or your loved ones do not have to be actively suicidal to use this number. Other resources

available can be found through kansasagstress.org or by calling any Wildcat Extension District office.

In 1789, Benjamin Franklin wrote “Nothing is certain except death and taxes.” I’ll add the advice: “Don’t rush either of these.”

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