



*Utilizing an arts-
base approach to
improve mental
health and stress
in Farm Worker
communities*



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About me:

History of work
in farm worker
community

Clinical Social
Worker

20 years at
Purdue

Role with
National and
Indiana
AgrAbility

AgrAbility History

Several similar programs prior to establishment of AgrAbility at federal level

AgrAbility began through the 1990 Farm Bill with funding starting in 1991

In 1991, there were 8 funded state and regional AgrAbility projects (SRAPS); as of 2022, there are 21 SRAPs and several previously-funded affiliate projects

One National AgrAbility Project (NAP) supports the SRAPs

What Disability Types does AgrAbility

- ▶ Address?

Disability within the Agricultural Community

▶ Causes of disability

- ▶ Traumatic injury (agriculture is one of the most hazardous occupations). Many injuries also come from off-farm incidents.
- ▶ Disease (Arthritis impacts many farmers)
- ▶ Aging (Average age of U.S. farmers is 58+)

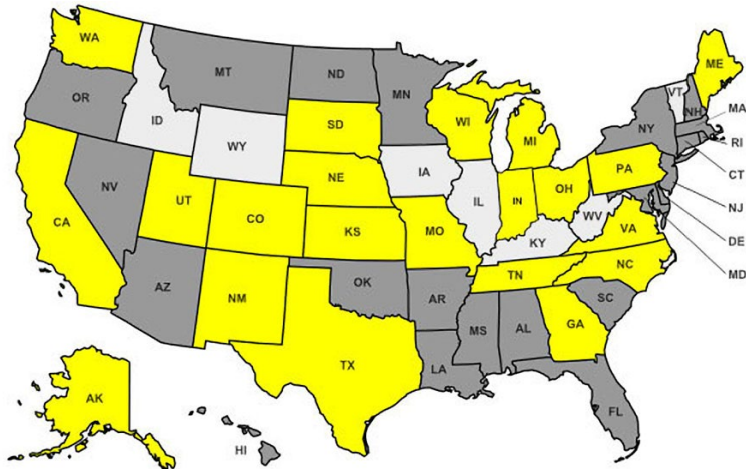
▶ Prevalence of disability

- ▶ At least 12.9% of farm population impacted by disability
- ▶ At least 740,000 of the U.S. farm, ranch, and agricultural community impacted by disability

▶ Miller and Aherin, 2018. Journal of Agricultural Safety and Health, 24(4): 243-260.



Multifaceted Impact



Key  State/Regional Project  Affiliate Project  No Project

AgrAbility Projects 2022

Migrant/Seasonal Farmworker Risk Factors

- ▶ Isolation
- ▶ Suffer mortality/morbidity rate higher than the vast majority of American population.
- ▶ Poverty
- ▶ Limited Access to Healthcare
- ▶ Hazardous Working Condition

Interpersonal Sources of Stress

- ▶ Family Problems
- ▶ Relationship Issues
- ▶ Mental health
- ▶ Addiction
- ▶ Long hours
- ▶ Being away from family and community
- ▶ History of Trauma

Symptoms of Mental Health or Stress Problems

Symptoms of Mental Health Challenges and Stress

- ▶ Sleeping/Withdrawn
- ▶ Drug/Alcohol issues
- ▶ Family Violence/Problems with Anger
- ▶ No interest in participating in family activities
- ▶ Loss/Increase of Appetite
- ▶ Lack of Family/Community Connection

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Barriers to seeking help for stress and mental health in farm workers

- ▶ Poverty
- ▶ Access
 - ▶ Limited English Proficiency
- ▶ Limited resources
- ▶ Cultural norms
 - ▶ Lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate services

Breaking the Silence: Social Attitudes around Mental Health Disabilities

Male
Involvement

Social
Acceptance
of struggle

Myths about
mental
health

Media
messages

Social Taboo-
shame, lack
of dialogue

See mental
health as
weakness

Language and Culture Concepts of Health



Concepts of Help Seeking

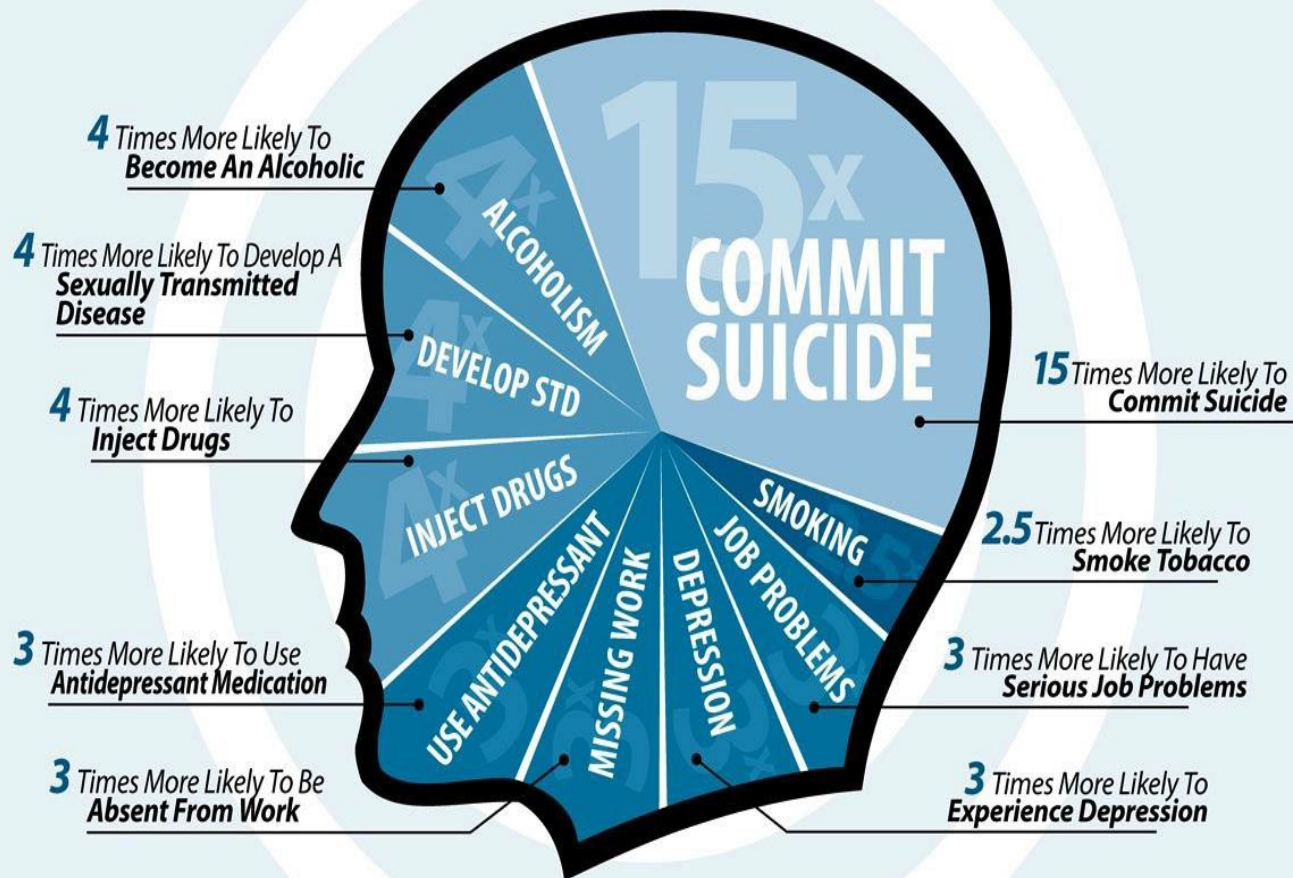
Effects of Trauma

Behavior we see in triggered traumatized individuals appears impulsive, very out of touch with what is going on in the environment; they are responding to internal stimuli

A history of trauma **can** make it difficult to:

- Cope with stresses of everyday life
- Trust others
- Benefit from relationships
- Maintain memory, attention, thinking
- Regulate behavior
- Control expression of emotions

PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED TRAUMA ARE:



Increasing Cultural Relevance of Mental Health Outreach and Services



*Communities are silent about mental health
and in denial about prevalence.*

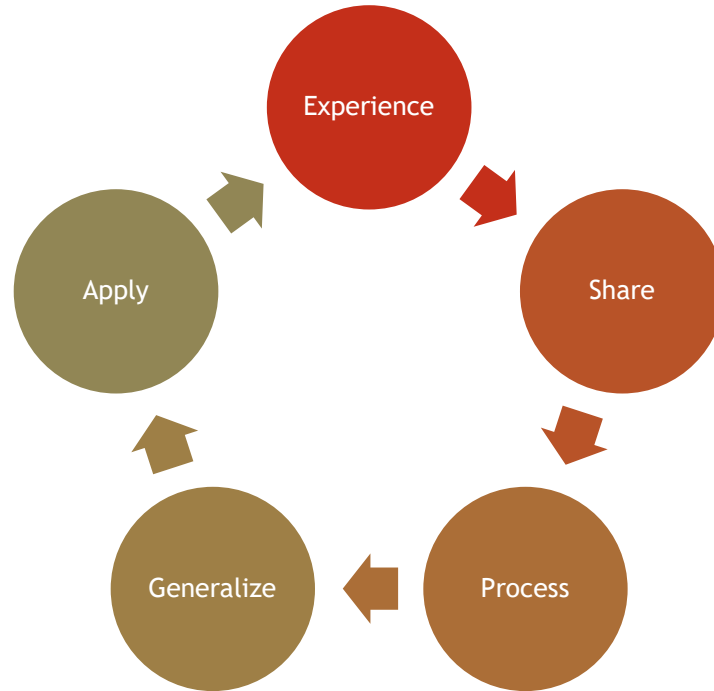
Social attitudes about alcohol/drug
use.

The Community blames person with
disability or mental health challenge.

People with mental health disorders
are stigmatized in the community.

Using art to talk about mental health and stress

- ▶ Facilitate dialogue
- ▶ Additional elements needed
- ▶ Various mediums
- ▶ Tool for mobilizing communities
- ▶ Problem solving



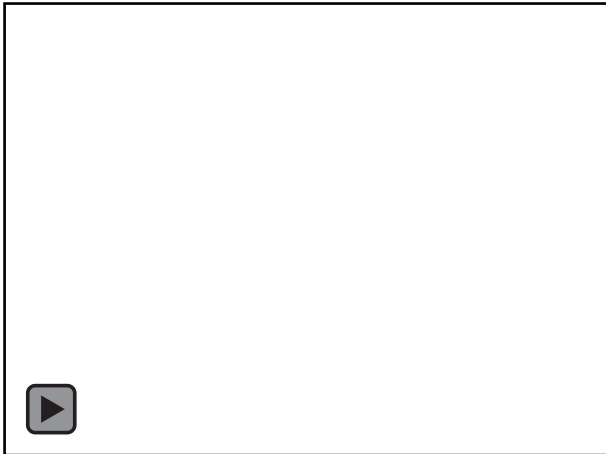
Experiential Learning Concept

Materials

- ▶ Examine your space
- ▶ Whats available..What can you afford?
- ▶ What's transportable?
- ▶ Type of art: movement, visual, music
- ▶ Medium: music, scarves, clay/plasteline, pencils, paint, crayons, voices...

Setting the stage

- ▶ Self Awareness
- ▶ Creating a Safe Space
- ▶ Role modeling



Framing the Issue

- ▶ Spirituality
- ▶ Oral History of Culture
- ▶ Synergistic view of health
- ▶ Informal approach to help seeking

Focus on the Journey

- ▶ May experience strong emotions or reactions
- ▶ Do what you need to do to take care of yourself
- ▶ Practice positive self care
- ▶ Art can help you express things that are beyond language





Creating a Safe Space

- ▶ Self-compassion
- ▶ Connecting to self
- ▶ Art may provide insight
- ▶ Stress relief





▶ Theater Arts

Acting on Impulse



Music

Moving toward
Prevention

Adapt to your audience

Questions





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www.agrability.org