

# HOW TO CULTIVATE A PRODUCTIVE MINDSET

There are many factors in agriculture that farmers have no control over. Beyond the uncertainty of the weather, destructive crises such as disease outbreaks and short-term incidents such as machinery breaking down or accidents can and do occur. One powerful factor that we always have the opportunity to control, however, is our mindset.

Farmers and those within the agricultural industry have a tendency to be eternal optimists, but with all of the variability in agriculture there are times when we can become overwhelmed and stressed more than normal. Having the right mindset can help increase productivity and resiliency, so we are better prepared when times are tough, and more able to manage our farms and take care of our families and ourselves.

Think of your mindset as a free tool you can use to save time and energy, and get the most out of what you do.



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## FACTS

- The human mind has 70,000 thoughts each day. That's 70,000 opportunities (Cleveland Clinic, n.d.).
- The typical brain is about 2 percent of your body weight but uses 20 percent of your energy (Jabr, 2012).
- Physical activity can help to lessen cortisol in the body and protect against negative impacts of stress (Puterman et al., 2012; Hamer, 2012; Heaney et al., 2014).

To learn more, visit [msue.msu.edu/managingfarmstress](https://msue.msu.edu/managingfarmstress).

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## MINDSET TACTICS

### USE SELF-TALK

The body hears what the mind thinks. Tell yourself that you can overcome any challenge. You can adapt. You have come through rough times before. You can do it again. You can't always avoid difficult situations, but you can choose the reactions you have when you experience them. Try choosing three words to tell yourself to help maintain the mindset you want – like calm, capable and controlled.

### USE YOUR BREATH

When faced with a challenge, first use your breath. Deep breathing calms the mind and can help you focus. It can also reduce

chronic pain and improve sleep. Try breathing deeply five times, releasing the air slowly. Combine deep breathing with self-talk to boost productivity and stay on task.

### USE ACCEPTANCE

When things are beyond your control, the most productive step you can take is to accept it. Making acceptance a part of your mindset can save you time and energy by letting you focus on the solution instead of getting frustrated by the problem. Try making the word “accept” a part of your self-talk and using deep breathing as a time to pause, accept and begin problem solving.

## RESOURCES

### FURTHER READING

- “Stress Free For Good: 10 Scientifically Proven Life Skills for Health and Happiness” by Fred Luskin and Ken Pelletier
- “Full Catastrophe Living” by Jon Kabat-Zinn
- “Mindfulness: Finding Peace in a Frantic World” by Mark Williams and Danny Penmanship
- “The Book of Forgiving” by Desmond and Mpho Tutu
- “The Miracle of Mindfulness” by Thich Nhat Hanh

### SUICIDE PREVENTION RESOURCES

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Crisis Text Line: Text “GO” to 741741
- Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255

### REFERENCES

Cleveland Clinic. (n.d.). You are your brain. *Healthy Brains*. <https://healthybrains.org/brain-facts/>

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### MINDFULNESS AND STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

#### 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: Alternates to Anger online program, visit: [https://www.canr.msu.edu/alternatives\\_to\\_anger/relax\\_alternatives\\_to\\_anger\\_online](https://www.canr.msu.edu/alternatives_to_anger/relax_alternatives_to_anger_online).



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Jabr, F. (2012, July 18). Does thinking really hard burn more calories? *Scientific American*. <https://>

[www.scientificamerican.com/article/thinking-hard-calories/](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/thinking-hard-calories/)

Puterman, E., O'Donovan, A., Adler, N. E., Tomiyama, A. J., Kemeny, M., Wolkowitz, O. M., & Epel, E. (2012). Physical activity moderates stressor-induced rumination on cortisol reactivity. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 73(7):604-611.