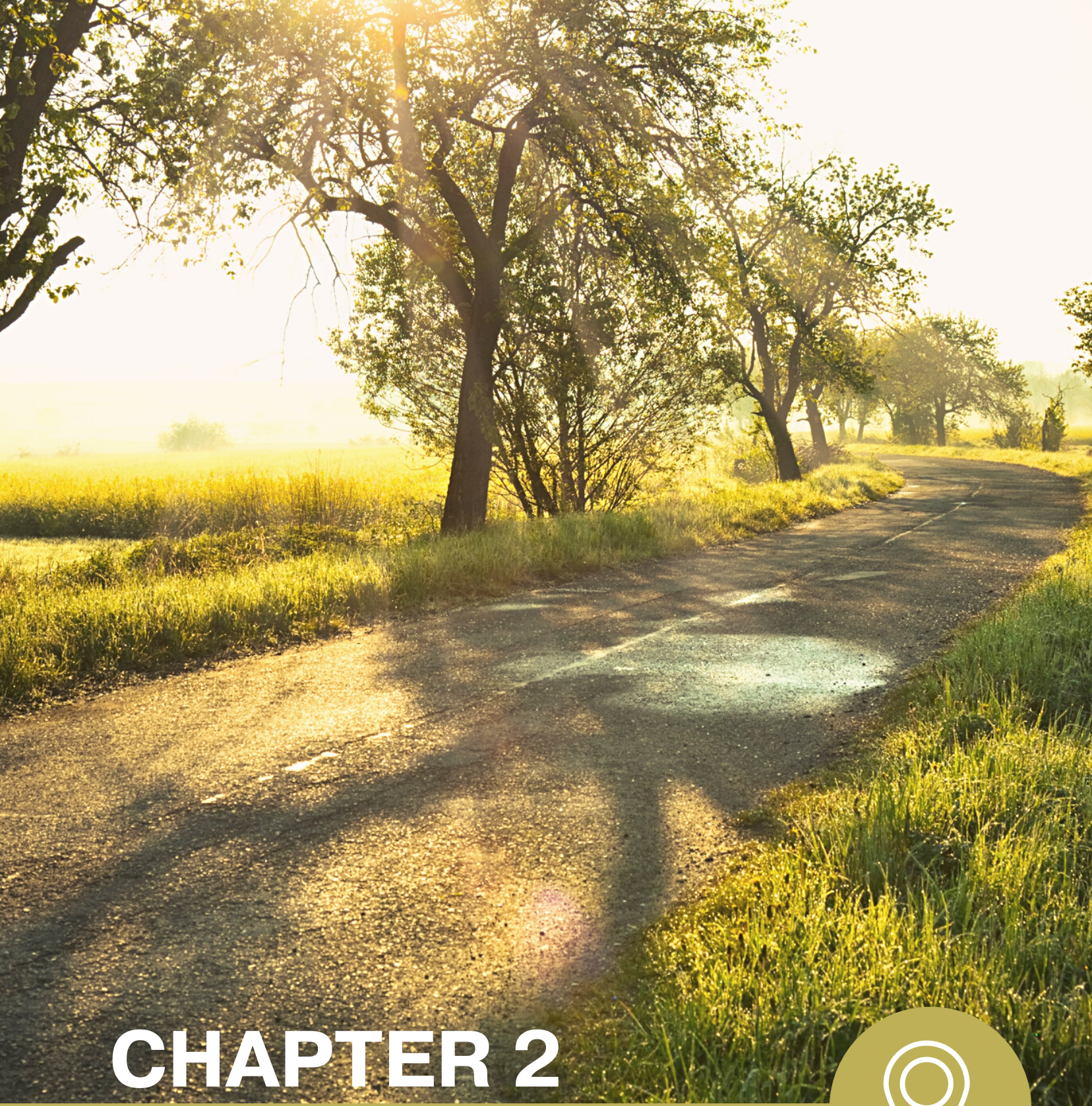


THE FARMER'S JOB HUNTING WORKBOOK

A New Career Beyond The Farm's Fences



WISCONSIN
Farm Center



CHAPTER 2

STARTING THE JOURNEY





You've already made enormous strides by deciding to make a career change. Whether you are looking for an off-farm job to supplement your income or to completely change careers, change can be stressful, and it is important to manage that stress as best as you can. This chapter also explores goal setting, which helps you identify and take concrete steps toward achieving your goals. Take some time to read through and implement the strategies below.

HEALTHY STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH STRESS

Watch What You Eat

Farmers do not always eat right, especially during spring planting season and harvest times when they are in a hurry to get the work done while the sun is shining or before the snow flies. Coffee and rolls or soda and candy bars frequently become the norm during these crunch times. A diet of empty calories like this can result in caffeine and sugar highs and the lows. If you find that you need more and more coffee, donuts, soda, candy bars, and chips to keep your energy up, you should consider a major change in your diet. Some simple guidelines include: eating a good breakfast and at least one other balanced meal each day, cutting back on caffeine and highly refined carbohydrates, reducing saturated fats, getting plenty of fruit and vegetables and including fiber in your diet. This diet will result in sustainable energy levels rather than the peaks and valleys that will eventually cause energy crashes and depressed moods. For more information, visit the following website: www.myplate.gov.

Get Regular Exercise

Farmers frequently say, "I get plenty of exercise on the farm." While there is some truth to this, the increased repetitive use of machines when farming can make it difficult to get exercise. A lack of exercise can cause headaches, backaches, depressed moods, anxiety attacks and insomnia. Fortunately, there are simple ways to work exercise into your already-packed day:

- Walk whenever you can. Walk from the farmstead to the field and from the far end of a parking lot to your church or implement dealer's door. Take a walk with your spouse in the early morning or after lunch.
- Do stretching exercises to stretch out all of the muscles between your head, neck, shoulders, and lower back. Tense muscles can cause headaches and backaches, and stretching exercises can prevent this problem.
- Jog, swim, go for a bike ride, or participate in other kinds of exercise that help you keep your body fit and mind sharp.

Use Positive Self-Talk and Gratitude

When we find ourselves in difficult or stressful situations, negative self-talk can kick in. Mastering the fine art of transforming negative self-talk into positive self-talk can be one of the most powerful strategies we have for staying up in a down economy. The first step is to recognize the negative self-talk when it occurs. Five of the most common forms of negative self-talk are swearing, "shoulds" and



“oughts,” assuming things will turn out negatively, putting yourself down, and blaming others. If you hear any of these things going through your head, say: “STOP!” Reframe the self-talk using more positive language. When you use positive self-talk, you allow yourself to accept the situation, nurture yourself, view the situation as a challenge you can handle, and act with courage. Positive self-talk might sound like this: “This is part of the challenge of farming... but I don’t have to worry. I’m a skilled person and I can rise to the challenge. If I do _____, I’ll be on my way to dealing with the situation.”

In stressful times, it is easy to think negative thoughts and forget what is going well. One technique is to focus on the small things in your life that you are grateful for. This shifts your mindset from a more negative to a more positive outlook, and it reminds you of the resources and strengths that you can access. A good place to start is to ask yourself a few questions:

What is one thing that went well today/this week?

Who is someone that I am thankful for today/this week?

What is one thing that I am grateful for today/this week?

Practice the Art of Relaxation and Mindfulness

When we are stressed out, our blood pressure rises, heart rate accelerates, metabolism speeds up, muscles tense up, and breathing becomes fast and shallow. In short, our bodies are gearing up to fight or to flee the situation. In addition, we often freeze; becoming paralyzed or immobilized and simply unable to act. Practicing relaxation on a regular basis can help farm family members get past the fight, flight, or freeze response.

The relaxation response requires four things: a quiet environment, comfortable position, passive attitude, and a mental device. In practice, it amounts to getting comfortable in a peaceful, quiet setting, closing your eyes, taking a few deep breaths, letting your muscles relax completely, and visualizing yourself in a peaceful, relaxed setting for a brief period of time. This activity, if practiced daily, can help farm family members feel more relaxed and centered. Try to find a time when you can take five minutes to find the peace that relaxation can bring.



Mindfulness is about remaining in the present moment and not spending too much time ruminating about the past or future. This stress relieving practice can be adapted and personalized to fit your needs and schedule, and is an easy way to ground yourself. The following activities can be done anywhere.

5 Senses	Body Scan	Mindful Breathing
<p>What is it? The 5 Senses Activity helps you connect to your senses and the environment around you. It grounds you in the present.</p>	<p>What is it? A body scan pays attention to the different parts of body, indicating areas of pain and allowing relaxation.</p>	<p>What is it? Mindful breathing is an exercise that helps calm the mind by bringing your attention to the breathing process.</p>
<p>How do I do it? Take in your environment and observe what your senses are telling you.</p>	<p>How do I do it? You can either lie down or sit in a chair for this activity. Start with some deep breaths and try to focus on your breathing.</p>	<p>How do I do it? Start by taking some depth breaths for about one minute. During this time, reflect on what you are feeling and what thoughts and emotions are present.</p>
<p>What are five things that you can see?</p>	<p>Next, focus on your overall body and how it feels. Is it sore? Is it hot or cold? How do your clothes feel against your body?</p>	<p>For another minute, simply focus on breathing deeply.</p>
<p>What are four things that you can touch/feel?</p>	<p>Pick a part of your body to start with. Some people like to start with the head and go down their body while others start at their feet at move upwards. Is this part of your body stiff, sore, or in pain?</p>	<p>Finally, while continuing to deeply breathe, focus on your body and how it feels.</p>
<p>What are three things that you can hear?</p>	<p>Move to the next body part. How does this one feel? Continue this process until you have scanned all body parts.</p>	
<p>What are two things that you can smell?</p>	<p>Example: Head ➔ Neck ➔ Shoulders ➔ Arms Hands ➔ Chest ➔ Stomach ➔ Back ➔ Butt ➔ Legs ➔ Feet</p>	
<p>What is one thing that you can taste?</p>		



Talk With Family Members

When we experience stress, we often fail to talk with the most important people in our lives. It happens for many reasons: we may be embarrassed by the situation, we may feel we have failed our family, or do not know what to say or how to say it. Chances are family members already know there are problems. It is better to talk openly with family members. It will help you get concerns/frustrations off your chest and you may be able to solicit their help in resolving issues. Your children can assist by pitching in to help with the work or by cutting back on family expenses. Adult brothers and sisters can assist by providing labor or extending the provisions of a farm purchase agreement. Parents can also help if they know the situation you are facing. So, summon your courage and share your situation in an honest way that is sensitive to the concerns family members may have. It could be one of the most helpful conversations you can have.

Build a Positive Support System

One of the most common responses when farm families find themselves in long-term stressful situations is to withdraw or pull back from their social support system—family, friends, neighbors, church, school, and farm organizations. This is a common response, but it's not a healthy one. Family, friends, neighbors and other people or organizations provide us with one of the best buffers for stress. They allow us to vent feelings or get things off our chests, to solve problems and explore options and to identify resources that can be helpful in difficult situations. You don't want to share your problems with everyone you meet (the grapevine works quite well in rural communities!), but it can be helpful to share problems and concerns with people in a position to be helpful: a trusted friend, your pastor, your veterinarian, your University of Wisconsin-Extension agent or technical college farm training specialist, your DHI representative, your artificial inseminator, or your local feed dealer. Build a support system that works for you by building a trusting relationship with people who are in a position to help you succeed in farming.

Learn to Deal with Conflict

Farmers can find themselves in conflict with creditors, farm inspectors, power plant representatives, state food safety staff, natural resources staff, and any number of other people. If a farmer responds in a negative way to creditors or regulatory staff, the sparks can fly and the farmer may later regret his impulsive action. A few guidelines are in order for dealing with conflict:

- Talk directly with the other person. Don't avoid or go around the person you are in conflict with or it will make the situation worse. If you have overdue bills, talk to your creditors, share your situation with them and offer to work out a repayment plan.
- Choose a time that works for both of you. Be considerate of the other person's schedule and find a time when you can truly focus on the issues to be discussed.
- Take a listening stance into the conversation. The other person will be more likely to listen to you when you have demonstrated that you've heard what he/she has said.
- Be assertive but not aggressive. Make sure you help the other person understand your perspective on the issue and assert your needs in the situation.



- Talk it all through. Don't avoid uncomfortable issues or they will come back to haunt you.
- Identify mutually agreeable solutions. Strive for win/win solutions and keep talking about options until you find one that will work for both of you.
- If the stress of any conflict is too much, reach out for help. The Wisconsin Farm Center offers free mediation services to farmers and has Mediators available to help settle difficult conflicts. Call the Farm Center for more information: 1-800-942-2474.

Take Time to Laugh and Play

When times get tough, farm families tend to work harder—they farm more acreage, add more livestock, start a new enterprise or business, or do all of these things. When they do this, they may become exhausted and lose their sense of humor and perspective. It is important to take time to laugh, to play, and to engage in fun activities or recreation. Fun activities do not need to be expensive. It can be as simple as getting together with other farm families for a meal, a movie, or game of cards. By getting together with other farm families you are also strengthening your support system.

GOAL SETTING

The best part about a career change is that you have the opportunity to take on a new adventure and set new goals to work towards. Goals give us direction in life by keeping us moving in the direction we want to go and telling us when we get there. Setting goals now will help you feel more confident in the job hunting process and give you a clear vision of what to work toward.

Developing Your Goals

Goals are more likely to be reached if they follow the S.M.A.R.T. goal format.

S – Specific

M – Measurable

A – Action-Oriented

R – Relevant

T – Timely

Use the following worksheets to help you develop at least one short-term goal and one long-term goal using the S.M.A.R.T goal format. After you have completed this goal setting exercise, refer back to these worksheets regularly to ensure you are on the right track to success and alter your course of action or deadlines if necessary. See the example on the next page.



S.M.A.R.T. GOAL WORKSHEET

SHORT-TERM *(smaller, italic text gives examples of what your goals could look like)*

Step 1: Write down your goal in as few words as possible.

My goal is to: *find supplemental work*

Step 2: Make your goal detailed and SPECIFIC.

Who: *I*

What: *will apply for three part-time jobs*

When: *in the next month (July)*

Where: *within a 20-mile radius of my farm*

Step 3: Make your goal MEASURABLE.

I will measure / track my goal by using the following methods: *tracking the status of my job applications (How many steps/sections of the application have I completed? How many applications have I completely finished?)*

I will know I've reached my goal when: *all three applications are finished and turned into the right people*

Step 4: Make your goal ACTION-ORIENTED.

HOW will you reach this goal? List at least three steps you need to take to accomplish this goal:

1. *Find jobs to apply for (will look at local listings, online, etc.)*



2. Make sure I have all necessary information for the applications (work history, potential references, identification documents, etc.)

3. Fill out and turn in the applications

Step 5: Make your goal RELEVANT.

Why do you want to reach this goal? *To ensure that my farm can continue at its current capacity, I need to get supplemental employment*

Step 6: Make your goal TIMELY.

I will reach my goal by: ____ / ____ / ____
July 15, 202X

I will have completed _____ step by ____ / ____ / ____.
first step by June 25, 202X

I will have completed _____ step by ____ / ____ / ____.
second step by July 2nd, 202X

I will have completed _____ step by ____ / ____ / ____.
third step by July 15, 202X



S.M.A.R.T. GOAL WORKSHEET

LONG TERM *(smaller, italic text gives examples of what your goals could look like)*

Step 1: Write down your goal in as few words as possible.

My goal is to: *transition my current farm (both crop and dairy farming) to only crop farming*

Step 2: Make your goal detailed and SPECIFIC.

Who: *My spouse and I (owners of the farm)*

What: *will have an exclusively crop-based operation (corn, soybeans, etc.)*

When: *in 3 years (July 15th, 202X)*

Where: *on our farm*

Step 3: Make your goal MEASURABLE.

I will measure/track my goal by using the following methods: *keeping a written record on actions I have taken on my goal (when I take a step to reach my goal, I will log it in my designated planning notebook)*

I will know I've reached my goal when: *the products that my farm produces are strictly crop based (instead of some crops and dairy products)*

Step 4: Make your goal ACTION-ORIENTED. *for this goal, there would be more than three steps (start with what you will do first and once you reach these, assess what needs to happen next and make more steps)

HOW will you reach this goal? List at least three steps you need to take to accomplish this goal:

1. *Make a detailed plan of what/how I want my future crop farm to operate. (What will I plant? Cash crops, specialty*



products, organic crops, etc.? How many acres can I operate? What are the costs? What are the benefits? What would success look like?)

2. Assess the resources my farm has for an exclusively crop based operation (What do I already have—machinery, buildings, land, etc.? What will I need?)

3. Create a plan for getting rid of dairy farming resources (What can I sell—cattle, machinery, equipment, etc.? If I cannot sell something, what other options are there?)

Step 5: Make your goal RELEVANT.

Why do you want to reach this goal? *My spouse and I are getting older, and it is harder to milk and keep up with the dairy side of our farm. However, we still can work on the crop side and are not ready to retire yet. We want to make this transition to crop based farming because we are focusing on our health and the needs of our family.*

Step 6: Make your goal TIMELY.

I will reach my goal by: ___ / ___ / ___

July 15th, 202X

I will have completed _____ step by ___ / ___ / ___.

First step by October 15th, 202X

I will have completed _____ step by ___ / ___ / ___.

Second step by January 15th, 202X

I will have completed _____ step by ___ / ___ / ___.

Third step by April 15th, 202X

**After this, I will assess my goal's progress and make more steps.*