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Rural Services Forum

The Social Impact of the Drought

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Hamilton

Key issues brought on by the drought



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- Grief and loss
- Stress and anxiety
- Gender differences
- Major decision making, change, uncertainty and loss of control

Key Issues (cont)...



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- Isolation
- Financial Hardship
- Problems associated with health

What does this mean over the next 6-9 months?



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- ↑ Developing depression or another associated mental illness
- ↑ Family breakdown, problems with relationships
- ↑ Increased incidence in substance abuse
- ↑ Increased incidence of domestic violence

What does this mean over the next 6-9 months?



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- Changes in workloads both on and off-farm
 - ↓ Deterioration in physical well being leading to serious health problems
 - ↓ Decreased leisure/recreational time
 - ↑ Increased risk of suicide

What needs to be done?



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“Research shows that people who have strong social connections with families, friends and communities cope best in times of crisis.”

*Lifeline- Tool Kit
for getting through the Drought
2006*

What needs to be done?



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- Practical suggestions and ideas to support farmers and farming families
- What services are available (locally and beyond)
- Specific information about suicide prevention

What needs to be done?



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PREVENTING SUICIDE

- What to look for
- Ideas about what to say if you are concerned for someone's safety
- When and where to get professional advice and support

What needs to be done?



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BE AWARE OF

- Talking or joking about hurting themselves or suicide - any talk about suicide needs to be taken very seriously
- Depression or other associated mental illness
- Dramatic mood changes or changes in behaviour
- Loss of interest in things they previously enjoyed

What needs to be done?



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WHAT YOU MIGHT SAY

- Be direct, honest and matter of fact about suicide
- Use “I” statements
 - *“I am concerned about you”*
 - *“I have noticed you have been a bit down lately”*
 - *“Have you thought about suicide?”*

What needs to be done?



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- Be willing to listen
- Pick a time to talk with them when you will not be interrupted
- Tell them that most people who consider suicide get through the crisis

What needs to be done?



CHECK OUT THEIR SAFETY BY ASKING THEM

Lifeline Risk Assessment 2006

- Have you thought about how you might do it?
- Do you have the means to carry out the plan?
- Have you ever deliberately harmed yourself?
- Tell them about the support available to help them stay safe and get help
- *“How can I help YOU to stay safe?”*

What needs to be done?



WAYS YOU CAN ASSIST

- Tell them that help is available and that they can get through it
- Encourage/persuade them to get professional support and advice
- Ask them to make a promise to you that they will not harm themselves for an agreed time period

OR

Ask them to promise to call Suicide Helpline or Lifeline if the suicidal thoughts return

What needs to be done?



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- Do not agree to keep it a secret
- Contact a professional person for your own support and advice
- ***Remember*** - most people are ambivalent about committing suicide
- Ask if there is a part of them that wants to stay alive

What needs to be done?



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SEEK COUNSELLING/ PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

- Provide information about local, state-wide and national services that may be able to assist
 - Community centres; Financial counsellors; Mental health services; Legal services; Support groups; Emergency relief
- Discuss ways of coping and strategies for surviving the drought that are relevant to them and their situation
- For general support through times of crisis and hardship

What needs to be done?



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LOOKING AFTER THEMSELVES/OURSELVES

- Spend time away from the farm
- Exercise
- Eat well
- Sleep well
- Laugh
- Enjoy time with families and friends
- Get involved in community projects
- Have hope - this drought will end and it will rain again



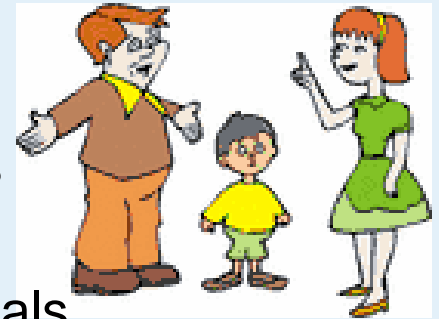
What needs to be done?



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TALK!!

- Share decision making responsibilities
- Be honest and open about current situation
 - Concerns, emotions and feelings
- Include the children in conversations where possible
- Have regular family meetings to discuss each family members experiences
 - Formulate short term plans and long term goals



Resources



- **24 HOUR SPECIALIST SUPPORT**
- Lifeline - 131114
- Suicide Helpline - 1300 651 251
 - Suicide information, support and counselling
- Kids Helpline - 1800 55 1800
- Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service
1800 015 188
- Western District Health Service - 5551 8222

Resources



The Frances Hewett Community Centre

2 Roberts Street, Hamilton

Phone: 5551 8450

Fax: 5572 5371

- Counselling service 5 days per week
- After hours service available
- Farm visits available