

# Families Facing Uncertainty in Agriculture— Who Copes Well with Tough Times?

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# What Do We Now Know?

- We have current, research-based information and practical steps that we can take to manage challenging times.
- We know who copes well/poorly with tough, challenging times.
- We know who copes well/poorly with family stress.



# Economic Stress ↔ Personal & Family Stress

- The worse things get, the more likely you and I are to see a friend or family member get mad, angry, and blame others.
- Stress
- Anger
- Depression
- Suicide



# What Does the Research Say?

- Difficulty with money has been reported as one of the leading causes of marital stress and divorce (Benjamin, 2001).
- Increasing debt also contributes to negative marital quality (Skogrand et al., 2005).



# What Can We Conclude?

- We can conclude that the longer the current economic financial crisis lingers for some individuals and families, the more incidences of depression we will see.



# Financial Hardship and Displacement



- Stress
- Family conflict and turmoil
- Depression and emotional problems
- Disruption of family relationships

*What are signs of high stress?*



## **RESOURCE:**

# **Farm and Ranch Family Stress and Depression: A Checklist and Guide for Making Referrals**





## RESOURCES:

- The Human Side of Agriculture: Managing Tough Times/Human Development
- <http://www.mtt.caahs.colostate.edu/resources/Default.aspx>
- Checklist Farm/Ranch is the 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet.



# Tough Times: Farm/Ranch Stress









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# Stress: Incidence of Stress in Farming and Ranching

- Farm owners were among the top 12 occupations with a significant incidence of stress-related illnesses
- People with primary employment in agriculture have the highest risk for disabling injuries and fatalities
- According to the National Health Interview Survey, 75 percent of the general population suffers at least “some stress” every two weeks, and half of those experience moderate or high levels during the same time period.
- According to NIOSH, farm owners were second only to laborers in the rate of death for stress-related diseases.

Fetsch, R. J. (July 22, 2005). *Farming, ranching: Health hazard or opportunity?* Colorado State University, Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet No. 10.201. Retrieved March 26, 2007 from <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/consumer/10201.html>

Fetsch, R. J. (April 28, 2005). *Transitions and changes: Who copes well?* Colorado State University, Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet No. 10.215. Retrieved March 26, 2007, from <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/consumer/10215.html>

# What were the top stressors for farmers?

- For 1,343 Iowa farm residents:
  - Death of a spouse
  - Death of a child
  - Disabling injury of a family member
  - Disabling injury to oneself
  - Foreclosure on a mortgage/loan
  - Divorce
  - Machinery breakdown during harvest
  - Loss of crop to weather
  - Loss of crop to pests/disease
  - Severe weather conditions

# Farm/Ranch depression

- IA farm men were more likely to experience depression if within the previous year they had:
  - Lost something of sentimental value
  - Experienced substantial income decline
  - Gone deeply into debt
  - Faced legal problems
  - Or experienced an increase in health problems.



# Stressors in farm families

- *Who is the canary in farm and ranch families?*



Farming & Ranching Are  
Among the Most  
Dangerous Occupations  
in the U.S.



# AgrAbility Project

- Do you know of a farmer/rancher with a disability or other challenge?
- Please refer him/her to Randy Weigel at the WY AgrAbility Project, 307-766-4186, [weig@uwyo.edu](mailto:weig@uwyo.edu).
- In CO, refer to Bob Fetsch at the CO AgrAbility Project, 970-491-5648, [fetsch@cahs.colostate.edu](mailto:fetsch@cahs.colostate.edu).
- AgrAbility provides information, education, and service to farmers/ranchers with disabilities, their spouse, and their children.

# Resilience—The Ability to Bounce Back After a Crisis

- Many of us are survivors.
- We have optimism, attitudes, strengths, and skills to persevere.
- We know how to bounce back from tough times.
- How else could we have made it this far?
- Our goal is to help you build on those strengths and assist you in persevering, no matter how challenging times get!



# What if...?

- Let's say all of us experience \_\_\_\_\_
- What will make the difference in 3-5 years who of us will be
  - Better off?
  - Worse off?
  - Or about the same?

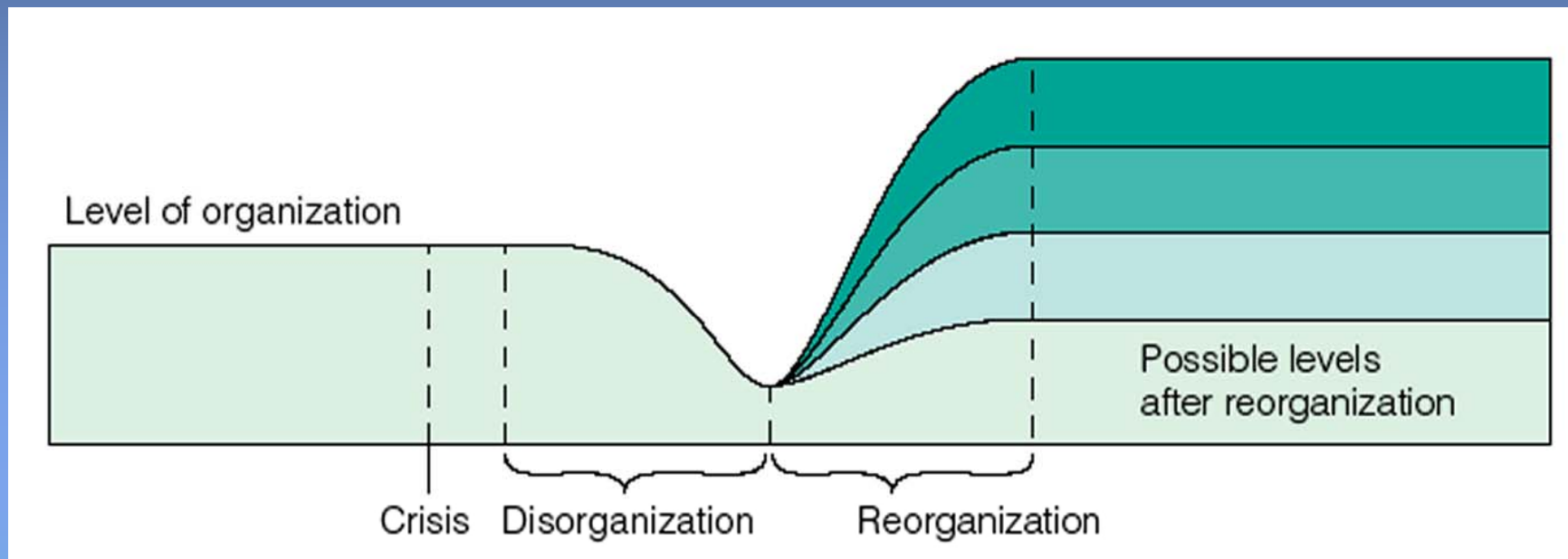


# Who of Us Will Be Better Off?

- From family stress research we know that:
  - 1/3 will be better off in 3-5 years,
  - 1/3 will be about the same, and
  - 1/3 will be worse off.



# Patterns of Family Adaptation to Crisis



# Who of Us Will Be Better Off?

- In which group will we be? That depends on three things:
  - 1) How much Pileup we experience.
  - 2) How well we use our Existing & New Resources.
  - 3) How well we manage our Perception of the stressors.





# How Much Pileup Do We Experience?

- Drought
- Blizzard
- Crop Failure
- Flood
- Fire
- Tornado
- Tractor/Combine Turnover



# How Much Pileup Do We Experience?

- Serious Vehicle Accident
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Back Injury
- Birth
- Divorce
- HIV/AIDS
- Alzheimer's Disease



# How Much Pileup Do We Experience?

- Pileup includes these new stressors plus
- Previously existing strains plus
- Future hardships induced by the stressor event.



# How Well Do We Use Our Existing and New Resources?

- Internal/Personal Crisis-Meeting Resources
  - Intelligence
  - Problem-solving skills
  - Physical-emotional health
  - Optimistic outlook
  - Sense of humor



# How Well Do We Use Our Existing and New Resources?

- External Family Crisis-Meeting Resources
  - Family bonds of trust
  - Appreciation > resentments
  - Family harmony
  - Sound finances and financial management practices
  - Positive communication skills
  - Effective conflict-resolution skills
  - Overall family satisfaction and Quality of Life
  - Extended family support

# How Well Do We Use Our Existing and New Resources?

- External Community Crisis-Meeting Resources
  - Community Alzheimer's Disease support group
  - Counselors/Therapists/Guidance Counselors
  - Priests/Ministers/Rabbis
  - Friends and neighbors
  - Colorado AgrAbility Project



# How Well Do We Manage Our Perception/Meaning of the Stressors?

- Time Management & Goal Setting Workshop participant said, “The day I lost my job was the best day of my life!”
- “Perception is reality.” --Tom Peters



# How Well Do We Manage Our Perception/Meaning of the Stressors?

- Let's monitor and "reframe" our negative perceptions/meanings to more positive ones.





# Economic Stress ↔ Personal & Family Stress

- During the mid-1980s our interdisciplinary research examined the correlations between stress and depression and last year income/debt, total assets/liabilities and overall financial outlook.



# What Do Tough Times Mean for Agricultural Families?

- Challenging times bring a new set of feelings—sadness, distress, fear, anger.
- New life changes
- Time to think back to what worked in past tough times for our family
- Bring together individuals, couples, and families to talk about how we bounced back from challenging times before, and how we can do it again now



# What resources are available for managing tough times?

- Farming and ranching: Health hazard or opportunity (F.S. no. 10.201)
- Ranching and farming with family members (no. 10.217)
- Transitions and changes: Who copes well? (no. 10.215)

Available from <http://www.ext.colostate.edu>



# What resources are available for managing tough times?

- Managing Stress During Tough Times (no. 10.255)
- Making Decisions and Coping Well with Drought (no. 10.256)

Available from <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/>



# What resources are available for managing tough times?

- Managing in Tough Times Resource Directory ([mittnet.extension.org](http://mittnet.extension.org))
- Fully searchable
- Nearly 900 resources on individual and family, farm and ranch, community, and youth topic areas.



# Colorado Agricultural Mediation Program

**Colorado Department of Agriculture**

**Mark Gallegos—CAMP**

**2331 W. 31<sup>st</sup> Ave.**

**Denver, CO 80211**

**303-477-0054**

***Does your State have a Mediation  
Program?***



## RESOURCES:

- Val Farmer. *Rural Stress Survival Guide*.
- I especially like Part 3 How to Cope in Hard Times and Part 4 Getting Help.
  - Attitude is important during hard times.
    - Try to find meaning in setbacks.
    - Don't dwell on the past.
    - Stop blaming others.
    - Give yourself permission to grieve.



## RESOURCES:

- Val Farmer. *Rural Stress Survival Guide*.
  - Explaining hardships aids healing
    - Going through the cycle of loss
    - Sharing the pain
  - Working through emotions to get to problem-solving
    - Pay attention to your relationships.
    - Be flexible and adapt.
    - Do what you have to to put bread on the table.
    - Re-evaluate your priorities.
    - Make a budget that fits your circumstances.
    - Live one day at a time.
    - Take good care of yourself and your family.



## RESOURCES:

- Val Farmer. *Rural Stress Survival Guide*.
  - Barriers to seeking help
  - Seeking help is smart.
    - Should I seek professional help?
  - How to help a family in crisis
- Google “Rural Stress Survival Guide.”





## **personal nature of agriculture**

**Recovering from Natural Disasters [B-1103](#)**

**Men and Depression [B-1104](#)**

**Agriculture and Skin Cancer: What You Should Know [B-1105](#)**

**Lenders and Angry Customers [B-1113](#)**

**Surviving Tragedy [B-1117](#)**

**Men Seeking Help [B-1134](#)**

**[http://www.uwyo.edu/ces/LIFE/Personal\\_Nature\\_Main.html](http://www.uwyo.edu/ces/LIFE/Personal_Nature_Main.html)**



**personal nature of agriculture**

## **Agricultural Producers and Stress Series**

The Importance of a Healthy Attitude

When Do You Need a Counselor?

Eating and Activity for Health and Pleasure

Identifying Stress on the Ranch and Farm

Learning to Relax

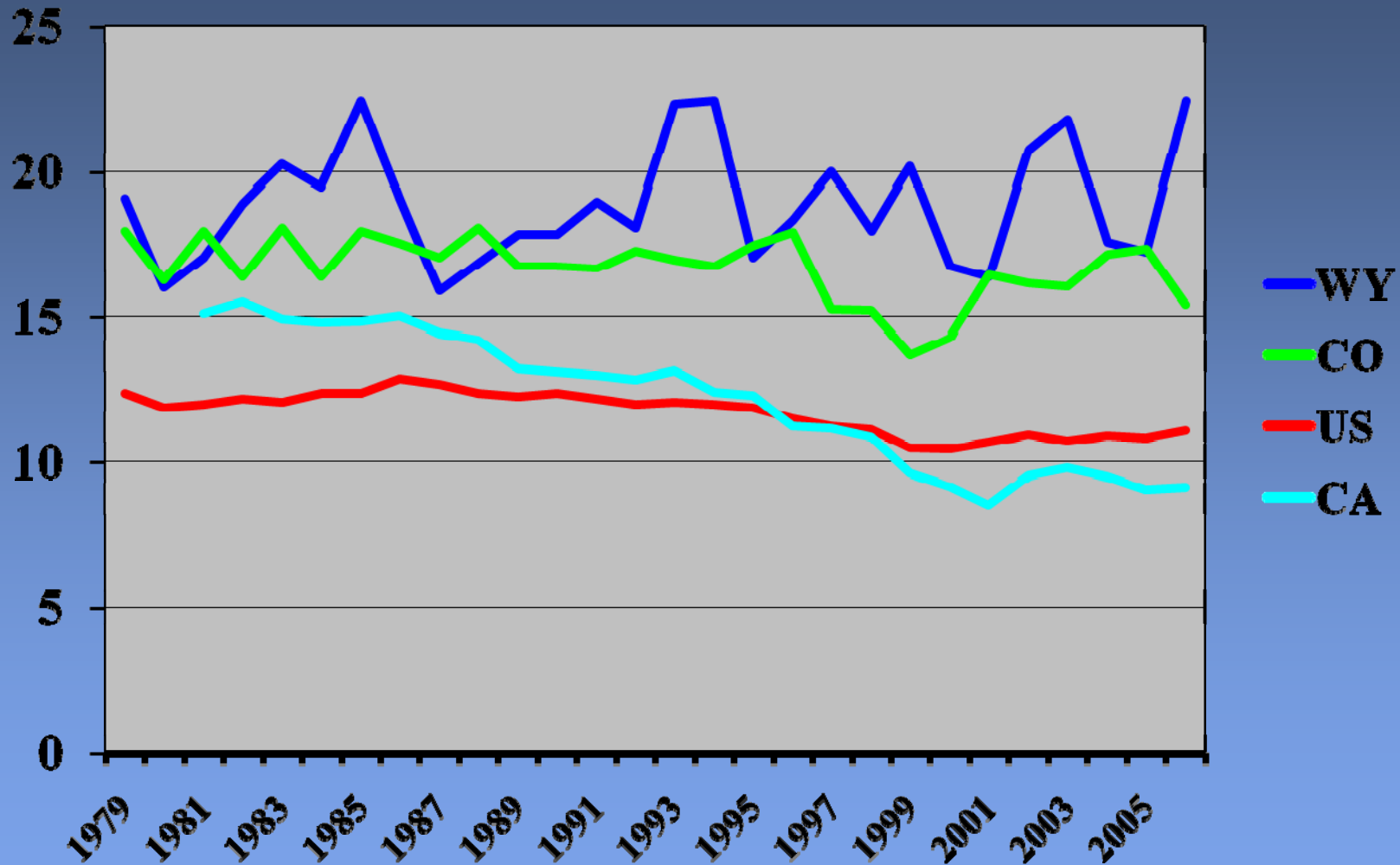
Finding Your Team of Experts

[http://www.uwyo.edu/ces/LIFE/Personal\\_Nature\\_Main.html](http://www.uwyo.edu/ces/LIFE/Personal_Nature_Main.html)

# Why Is Managing Tough Times Important?

- When times are tough, people are more likely to have problems with:
  - Stress
  - Anger
  - Depression and emotional problems
  - Suicide
  - Family conflict and turmoil
  - Disruption of family relationships

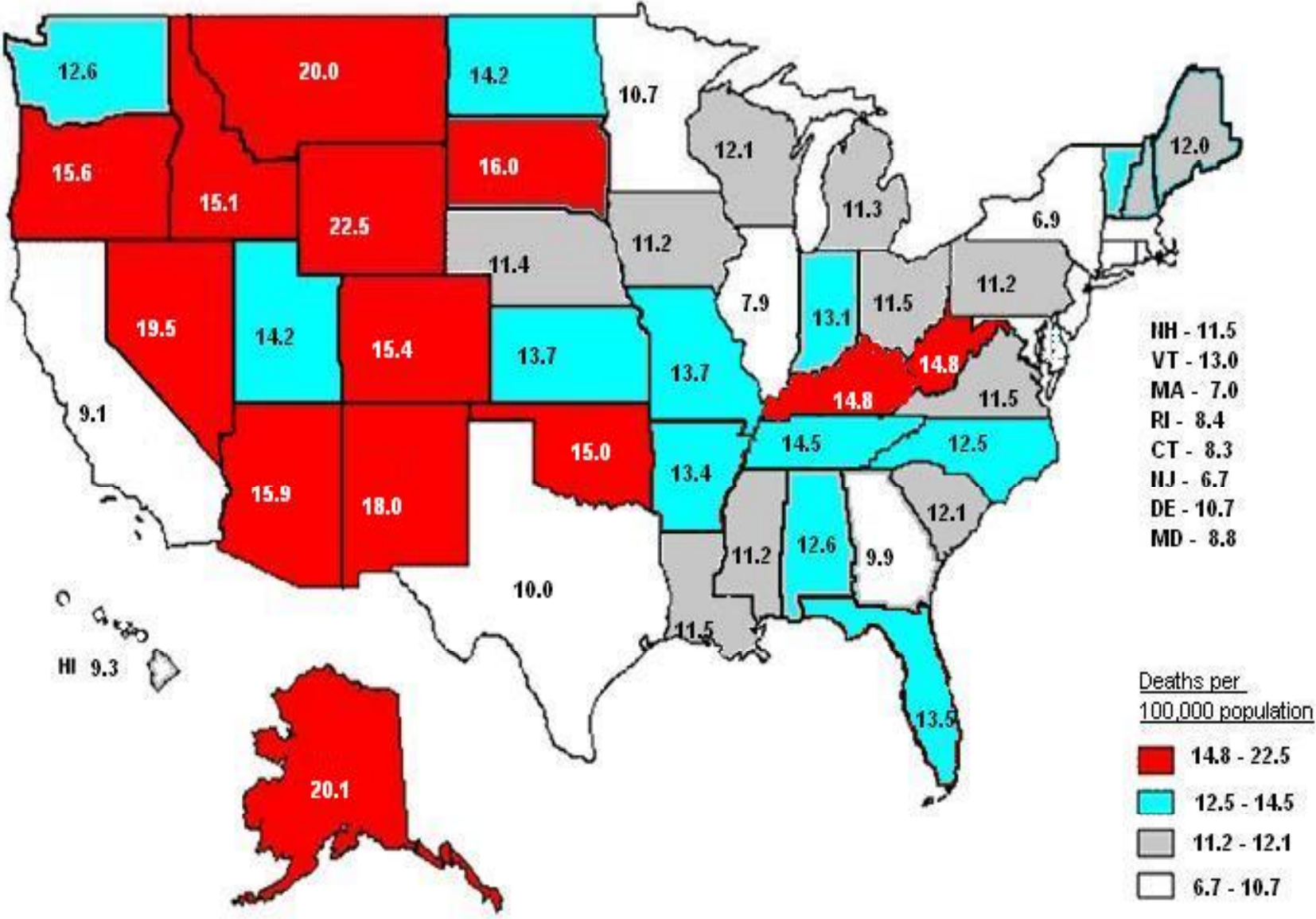
# Suicide rates per 100,000 population by state and US



Source: Centers for Disease Control. (2009). Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS). Retrieved July 23, 2009 from <http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>.

# Suicide Death Rates

## United States, 2006



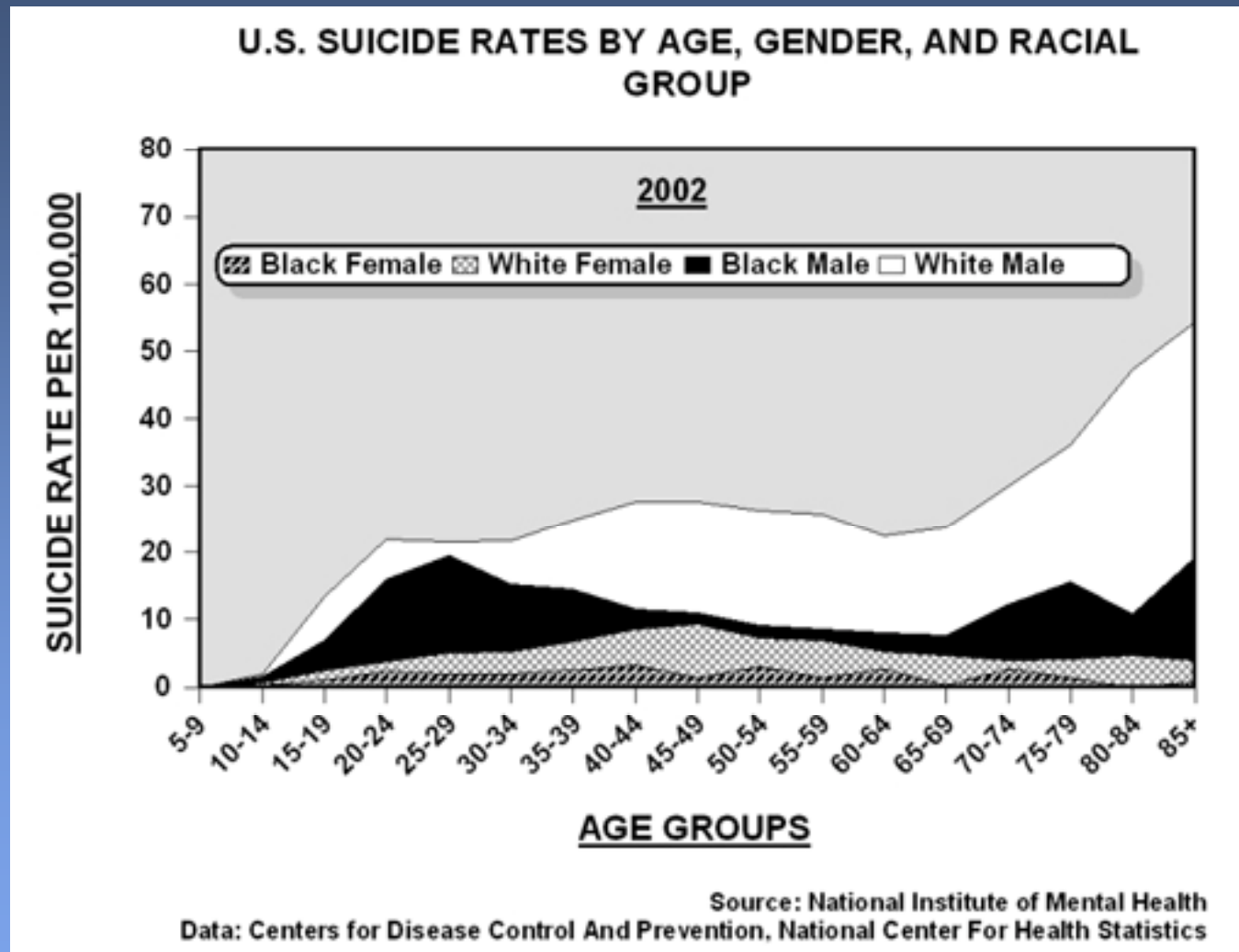
Source: SPAN USA, <http://www.spanusa.org>

## 2006 U. S. Suicide Rate by State Top Quintile

STATE	NUMBER of SUICIDES	RATE
Wyoming	116	22.5
Alaska	135	20.1
Montana	189	20.0
Nevada	486	19.5
New Mexico	352	18.0
South Dakota	125	16.0
Arizona	979	15.9
Oregon	579	15.6
Colorado	730	15.4
Idaho	222	15.1
Oklahoma	537	15.0

Source: Centers for Disease Control. (2009). Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS). Retrieved July 23, 2009 from <http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>.

# National Institute of Mental Health Current Suicide Rates in U. S.





# Masculine “Scripts”

## (David & Brannon (1976))

1. No sissy-stuff - men are expected to distance themselves from anything feminine.
2. Big wheel - men should be occupationally or financially successful.
3. Sturdy oak - men should be confident and self-reliant.
4. Give ‘em hell - men should do what is necessary to “make it.”
5. “When you’re hurting, be a man—keep it inside and tell no one!” (Fetsch, 2009.)



# Western mountain states have the highest suicide death rates.

- The risk of suicide death increases among older men and is especially high for 75 years plus—especially if they lose their spouse and their dairy/farm.
- Most are white and not married.



## **RESOURCE:**

# **Farm and Ranch Family Stress and Depression: A Checklist and Guide for Making Referrals**



# What can we do to manage tough times?

- Recognize signs of farm and ranch stress.
- Take action. Find out about which local resources are available.
- Check your yellow pages under “Counselors.”
- Call 1-800-SUICIDE/784-2433 and visit with a live trained person. Talk with a person trained to listen to depressed and suicidal callers and concerned friends about local resources 24 x 7.



# Question...

*Which is more important?*

- *Your and your family's Net Worth?*
- *Your and your family's Self-Worth and Self-Esteem?*



For more information on  
Managing Challenging/Tough  
Times,

**Contact Bob Fetsch**  
**Colorado State University**  
**Cooperative Extension**  
**970-491-5648**

[fetsch@cahs.colostate.edu](mailto:fetsch@cahs.colostate.edu)

<http://mtt.cahs.colostate.edu/>



# Questions?

**970-491-5648**

[fetsch@cahs.colostate.edu](mailto:fetsch@cahs.colostate.edu)



**Thank you  
very much!**

