



FARM WELL NEWSLETTER

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YOUR STRENGTHS ARE MANY!

WRITTEN BY JOHN SHUTSKE

The new year is upon us. Most of us are eager to get on with another year, armed with a list of resolutions and a to-list that can be daunting. Planning for another year, the coming growing season, getting all our financials in order, and moving forward is important. But, it's also important for our well-being and mental health to occasionally reflect on all the great things we have (often through practices of gratitude) and all we've accomplished in the past 12 months. To help you with your 2022 "to do" list, consider also reflecting on 2021 and make a short list of all the great things you got done! It feels good. It can also remind us of all the skills we've built and strengths we needed to accomplish all the things you got done.

These days, to succeed in agriculture, it takes a set of skills and strengths that are rare in our society—persistence, patience, grit, and determination are a few. As we step back in a purposeful way to reflect on the important strengths we possess, we build our confidence. These strengths have been developed through past experience, our upbringing (including the influence of our parents and other family), and our informal or formal education. When we clearly understand and take the time to "name" our strengths, it helps build the confidence it takes to tackle the big challenges we will most certainly face. A mental inventory of the skills we possess is like reviewing the functions of that multi-tool we carry around in a toolbox (or pocket). When a complex issue arises in 2022 (and you know they will), it's comforting and health to know that you have the tools it will take to tackle the problem.

Sometimes this process of developing an inventory feels uncomfortable. It might feel like we're bragging if we talk about personal strengths and skills. That's a natural feeling, but research shows that clear thinking about our strengths and skills, and perhaps writing them down someplace for your own personal reflection reduces stress and builds self-esteem. This becomes important when times are tough or when you have feelings of self-doubt or concern for the future. So what are we talking about? These might be things like: [Continues on page 2]



UMASH Farm Safety Check: Working in the Cold JANUARY 2022

Cold temperatures pose serious threats to a person's health, leading to frostbite, hypothermia, or trench foot, which occurs when the feet have been exposed to water for too long. Symptoms of hypothermia may include lack of coordination, confusion, slurring, drowsiness, or slowed breathing. Signs of frostbite and trench foot include skin that is numb, swollen, firm, blistered, red, or gray. [Click Here](#) to learn more.

You Should Know About -

[Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center \(UMASH\)](#)

THE UMASH VISION:

Healthy and Safe People in Sustainable Agriculture

The mission of the Upper Midwest Agricultural Health and Safety Center (UMASH) is to improve the health and safety of agricultural workers, their families, and farm visitors in the Upper Midwest region.





UPCOMING EVENTS

COMET: Catchup & Connect (for past COMET participants)

- **Virtual- Tue, 1/18 6:30PM**
- [Link](#) to register.

UW Extension: Farm Pulse Program, Make Sense of Financial Management

- **Virtual- Fri, 1/21 11am-12pm**
- [Link](#) to register.

The Water We Swim In:

- **Virtual- Fri, 2/4 11:30AM**
- [Link](#) to register.



Personality-related strengths:

- great sense of humor
- able to participate in a productive conversation
- good listener
- leadership strengths in your community, church, or ag organization
- can-do attitude and problem solver
- ability to positively impact your children or other loved ones through empathy and positive directing
- willingness to take off and spend quality time with loved ones or friends without worry (even if it's a weekend getaway)

Physical strengths:

- endurance and fitness that make it easier to get through long days during busy times
- ability to get a good night's sleep
- flexibility and ability to move
- general health status and willingness to proactively get routine medical care

Your Farm-Specific strengths:

- strong sense of vision and ability to anticipate the future
- financial knowledge, and knowing when to seek help from an accountant, banker, or attorney
- mechanical skills
- understanding of the biology of animal behavior, crop/animal health, soil quality.
- ability to learn about new technology related to machines, computers, apps.
- strong time management skills and ability to delegate tasks when it makes sense

Over the years, I've worked with dozens of farmers to help them inventory their strengths. In some cases, it was about helping them understand that they had what it might take to expand their operation or to change some part of their production system. I've also worked with farmers who were forced to exit—often because of health or a disability that made physical work impossible. In these cases, with an hour of conversation, it was easy for them to list two or three pages—almost a “farm resume” of sorts. Without exception, it helped make people feel confident, excited, and eager for that next important challenge despite the obstacles they needed to face.

So—grab a couple sheets of paper. Spend 30 minutes on one of these cold January nights. Make a list of all those skills and strengths YOU possess! You'll be surprised by the length of your list. Set it aside and check in with your list from time to time. You'll be ready to tackle 2022 head on!

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