



FARM WELL NEWSLETTER

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FARM WELL WI

SUBSCRIBE

Click Icon to visit website

JAN. 2022, ISSUE 5



HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR NEIGHBORS IN CRISIS - COMET TRAINING OFFERS GUIDANCE FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

WRITTEN BY ABBY WIEDMEYER - DAIRY STAR REPORTER & FARMER

LANCASTER, Wis. - In an effort to connect rural communities with the resources they may need to thrive emotionally, Southwestern Wisconsin Community Action Program and Farm Well Wisconsin adopted a training created to teach neighbors how to help neighbors.

"We offer this training to help people learn how to support each other better so that we can create thriving rural communities where everybody has the support that they need to live fulfilling lives," Chris Frakes said.

Frakes joined Shawn Monson, both of Farm Well, to deliver the training of Changing Our Mental and Emotional Trajectory - COMET for short - during a virtual event December 7th hosted by the Schreiner Memorial Library (Lancaster). The idea is to train people in rural communities to be able to have a conversation with someone who appears to be struggling with stress.

In Wisconsin, rural communities face significant shortages of both primary care and behavioral health care providers, said Frakes. Faced with similar challenges, COMET was created through a partnership between farmer, ranchers, and medical professional (the Community Advisory Council of the High Plains Research Network in Colorado).

Prior to the pandemic, people in southwestern Wisconsin reported an average of more than four poor mental health days each month; a statistic that likely rose in the last two years with the presence of the pandemic. In a 2021 National Farm Bureau survey, 66% of farmers and farmworkers said the pandemic has impacted their mental health. Statistics like these demonstrate the need for community members to be equipped with the skills to respond when friends, family members, and acquaintances are in a vulnerable space, said Frakes.

"COMET believes in the power of everyday interactions," Monson said. "COMET also believes that family members, teachers, coworkers and acquaintances can have a powerful influence on a person's wellness trajectory." **[Continues on page 2]**



United States Department of Labor: Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)

[Wind Chill Temperature: A Guide for Employers](#)

Outdoor workers exposed to cold and windy conditions are at risk of cold stress, both air temperature and wind speed affect how cold they feel. Wind Chill is the term used to describe the rate of heat loss from the human body, resulting from the combined effect of low air temperature, and wind speed. The Wind Chill Temperature is a single value that takes both air temperature, and wind speed into account. For example, when the air temperature is 40°F, and the wind speed is 35mph, the wind chill temperature is 28°F; this measurement is the actual effect of the environmental cold on the exposed skin.

[National Weather Service \(NWS\) Wind Chill Calculator](#): With this tool, one may input the air temperature and wind speed, and it will calculate the wind chill temperature.

The American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH) developed the following Work/Warm-up Schedule for a 4-hour shift takes both air temperature and wind speed into account, to provide recommendations on scheduling work breaks and ceasing non-emergency work.

To view the handy ACGIH chart- [Click Here](#)

You Should Know About - [The AgriSafe Network](#) - Motto: Protecting the People Who Feed the World

AgriSafe was formed in 2003 by rural nurses who believed that together they could improve the health and safety of farmers and ranchers. Today, AgriSafe builds the competency of health and safety professionals to deliver exceptional occupational agricultural health care.



UPCOMING EVENTS

The Water We Swim In:

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

COMET:

- **Virtual- Wed, 2/9 6-8PM**
- [Link to register.](#)

AgriSafe: What to Expect While Expecting- For Female Producers & Farmworkers in Ag

- **Virtual- Fri, 2/16 12pm**
- [Link to register.](#)



The workshop's questions and guidelines are meant to support community interaction by restrengthening the fabric that binds people in a community. This is done with a series of very simple questions to let fellow community members know someone is listening to them.

Monson said that everyone is subject to moving along a natural trajectory from wellness to a vulnerable space to crisis. The purpose of the simple questions is to catch someone before they get to the crisis area and help them rebound to wellness.

"The important thing to remember at this point in the process is that it's designed to be used pre-crisis," Monson said. "There's a way of supporting someone so they hopefully move away from crisis and back toward wellness with a gravity assist."

Gravity assist is a term used to describe one object helping another object get from one point to another if that object is not capable of getting from point A to point B on its own. This concept is applied to the COMET process by using people to help each other stay mentally well.

The questions that initiate the COMET process include saying things like, "You don't seem to be yourself lately," or "I noticed you haven't... (been at the football games) lately," or "How are things at home/work/school?"

Sometimes these questions make people feel nosy, however, for someone in a vulnerable space they can make a big difference, said Monson.

"There's a difference in being nosy because you're a gossip and recognizing that someone is in distress and you want to support them and be kind," he said.

Once the initial question is asked, a person is to listen without offering solutions. The purpose is to hold a space for the person under stress so they can feel heard. When people offer solutions right away, it makes the person feel like they are trying to get rid of them and the true problem might never surface.

Frakes and Monson gave an example of a neighbor noticing their neighbor's usually well-kept lawn suddenly looking unkept. If someone were to bring the lawn up to the person with the intention of initiating the COMET process, they might feel inclined to offer to help with the yard work. However, it is important to realize that the real problem is not the yard. The yard is just the visible part. The lawn might be neglected due to other chaotic factors that are causing stress on the person and moving them toward crisis.

"You don't want to go into fix-it mode too fast because sometimes people are just checking to see if it's really OK that they talk about a problem," Frakes said.

Once a person does open up, it is important to offer full attention. People will be more honest when there is adequate eye contact and follow-up questions. If it is someone whom is known well, it can be helpful to follow up a few days later with a text or a phone call.

"Following up really helps build trust and calling or texting can be a good strategy to do that," Monson said.

One thing that causes people to hesitate to ask questions is the anxiety of how to end a conversation once it has been started. The training emphasizes on concluding with care by ending on a positive note.

"Something as simple as saying, 'Thank you for sharing this with me,' and reassuring them that what they have said is going to stay with you can make people feel better about disclosing information" Monson said.

The process is meant to deal with people who may be in a vulnerable space. More in depth trainings are available for people who are worried about a loved one in crisis. Frakes said that everything is more manageable with help.

"To me, the core of COMET is anything we are struggling with can be talked about," he said. "When people sit and listen to us, we don't feel so alone."

Written by Abby Wiedmeyer and printed in the Dairy Star Newspaper. [Link to view original.](#)

Farm Well is funded by the Wisconsin Partnership Program at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health through its Community Impact Grants Program

