

# The Pressures of Agriculture



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# Our Farm





Me and my dad...a few years back...with hair





# Back to Farm Stress

- ▶ Let's start out with an exercise
- ▶ Either alone or with a partner I want you to list everything that can **affect** your stress level. Feel free to write it down or just list them in your head.
- ▶ Be as specific as possible. Don't just put weather, instead break it down more (tornados, hail, drought ect)

# Farm Stress

- ▶ Now I want you to go back over the list you just created
- ▶ This time rank each item on a scale of 1 to 5 as to how much **control** you have over each item
- ▶ As an example, drought should receive a score of a 1, as you don't have any control over the weather unless you know a really impressive rain dance!

# Possible List (not a lot of control here)

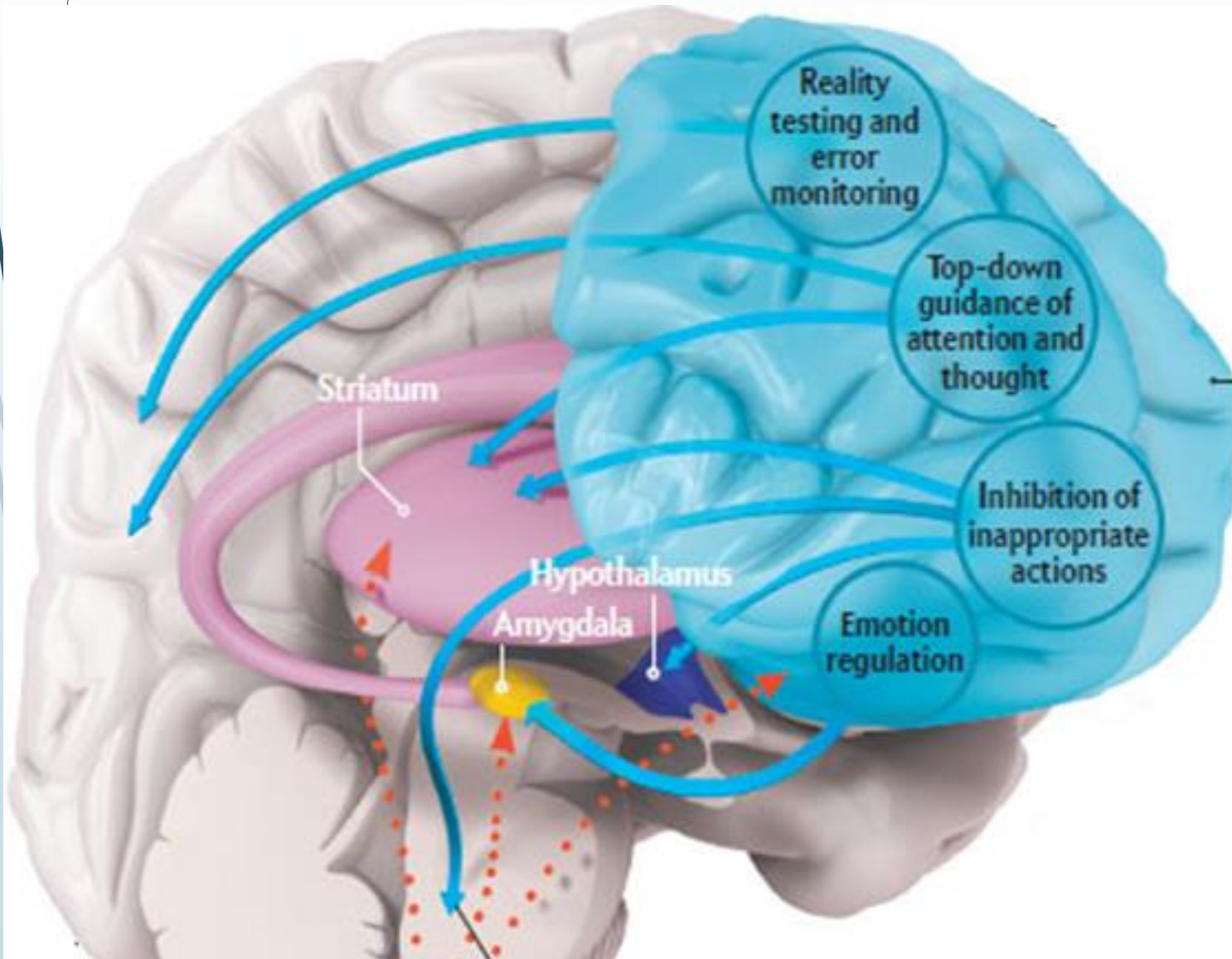
- ▶ Hail
- ▶ Fires
- ▶ Drought
- ▶ Rain at the 'wrong time'
- ▶ Tornados
- ▶ Early Freeze
- ▶ Breakdowns
- ▶ Routine maintenance
- ▶ Health issues
- ▶ Land prices ↑
- ▶ Fertilizer prices ↑
- ▶ Crop prices ↓
- ▶ Government regulations
- ▶ Financial issues
- ▶ Employee issues
- ▶ Any number of injuries
- ▶ Fixing Fence
- ▶ Neighbor isn't so neighborly
- ▶ Succession planning/denying
- ▶ Teenagers
- ▶ Haven't taken a vacation!
- ▶ That faucet in the house is still leaking



# Farm Stress

- This is the challenge, there are a lot of things that **affect** our stress in agriculture but many of those things are well beyond our **control**.
- This is a key issue for our stress in our lives.
- The trick is to keep yourself balanced in areas where resources are limited and challenges are a daily occurrence.
- To do this we have to make sure we are using the right tool for the job...well brain for the job.
- We all have two brains inside our head that react to stress.

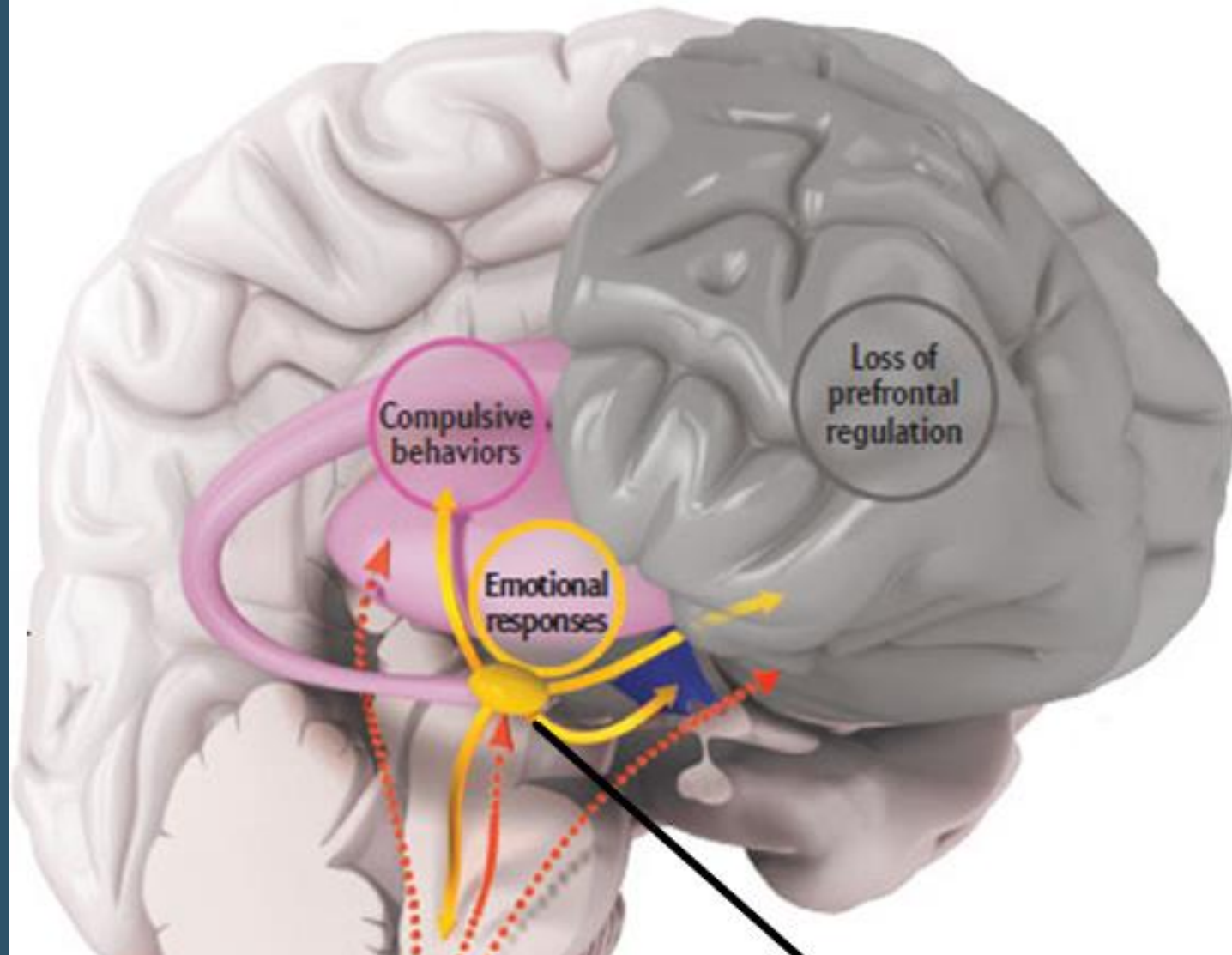
# Reflective - System 2



- ▶ This all sounds great, we should just use this part of the brain all the time and I'd be out of a job!
- ▶ Two major disadvantages to System 2
  - ▶ It's slow
  - ▶ It's lazy



# Reflexive - How we lose it- System 1



## ► Emotional Responses

- Fight
- Flight
- Freeze

## ► Compulsive Behaviors

- If it feels good or relieves stress = do it
- If System 1 keeps hijacking you it can lead to **Toxic Stress**

# Starting the conversation –DES model

- Before we get started, we need to get a couple of things right:
  - **Right Mind – Right Person – Right Time & Place – Right Tone – Right Words**
    - “We need to talk” vs “When would be a good time for you?”
- **D-Describe.** Describe—with no emotion and no evaluation—exactly what is bothering you. Don’t exaggerate. Don’t say always when you mean twice. This bloodless step must come first. **“I’ve NOTICED ...”**
- **E-Express.** Express how this makes you feel. Don’t accuse, don’t evaluate the other person, just identify which emotion you feel. **“I’M CONCERNED ABOUT...”**
- **S-Specify.** Specify exactly what you want your target to do. **“HELP ME UNDERSTAND...”**
- **Other Tips:**
  - Silence is okay- let them take time before they respond
  - If they disagree with what you have noticed – that is normal!
  - If they tell you not to be concerned- that is normal!
  - Don’t interrupt, don’t argue details
  - Will’s 3-5 rule





# What Isn't Supportive

## Do Not:

- Tell the person to “snap out of it”
- Act hostile or sarcastic
- Blame person for symptoms
- Adopt an overinvolved or overprotective attitude
- Nag the person to do what he or she normally would do
- Trivialize the person's experiences
- Belittle or dismiss the person's feelings
- Speak with a patronizing tone
- Try to “cure” the person

# Stress and Coping in Ag



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A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide. It features a dark grey arrow pointing right at the top. Below it, several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey sweep upwards and to the right, creating a dynamic, abstract background element.

# Warning Signs of Stress

- ▶ What are some of the things you notice about yourself when you start to get stressed?
- ▶ How long can it build before you notice it?
- ▶ How long can it build before you admit to it?
- ▶ What can happen to important areas of your life while it builds?

# Warning Signs of Stress

- Change in routines or social activities
- Decline in the care of animals
- Decline in the appearance of the farm
- Decreased interest in activities or events
- Increase in illness or other chronic conditions
- Increase in farm accidents
- Signs of stress in children
- When you ask them how it's going or how they are doing, there is a pause

So why is this happening?





# Ways to fight against our System 1

## ➤ Step 1

- Stop and actually ask yourself what Brain you are using and know your natural response. Are you more fight, flight or freeze?
- This is almost guaranteed to turn on Brain 2 in some way

## ➤ Step 2

- Try to figure out what brain the other person is using and how can you help them get back to brain 2

## ➤ Step 3

- System 1 responds to DANGER. Make sure to ask yourself if the situation you are dealing with is DANGER or DISCOMFORT... system 1 doesn't know the difference

## ➤ Step 4

- Self Care and SLOW things down to a speed that system 2 can process. If you get blocked, take a walk!!

# Weed in our thinking

- ▶ You think these are bad? They got nothing on System 1!



**Field Bindweed**  
(*Convolvulus arvensis*)



**Sericea lespedeza**  
(*Lespedeza cuneata*)



**Pignut**  
(*Hoffmannseggia densiflora*)



**Kudzu**  
(*Pueraria lobata*)



**Bur ragweed**  
(*Ambrosia grayi*)



**Musk thistle**  
(*Carduus nutans*)



**Russian knapweed**  
(*Centaurea repens*)



**Canada thistle**  
(*Cirsium arvense*)



**Johnsongrass**  
(*Sorghum halepense*)



**Quackgrass**  
(*Agropyron repens*)



**Leafy spurge**  
(*Euphorbia esula*)



**Hoary cress**  
(*Cardaria draba*)



# Top 5 Weeds from System 1

## All or nothing thinking



Sometimes called 'black and white thinking'

*If I'm not perfect I have failed*

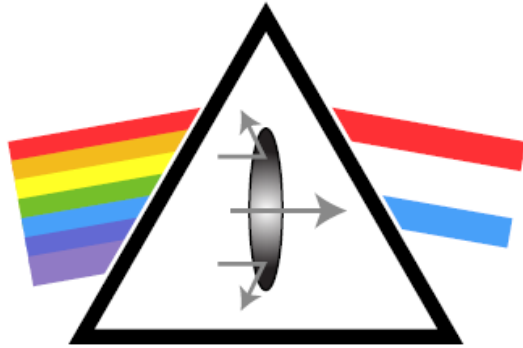
*Either I do it right or not at all*

- ▶ Just like Musk Thistle
  - ▶ Once I start down this road it can spread like wildfire and take over



# Top 5 Weeds from System 1

## Mental filter



Only paying attention to certain types of evidence.

*Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes*

## ► Like Canadian Thistle

- More like Musk Thistle than different but still it's own separate problem
- This kind of thinking can really affect how you think about your world and how much you beat yourself up





# Top 5 Weeds from System 1

**should**  
**must**

Using critical words like 'should', 'must', or 'ought' can make us feel guilty, or like we have already failed

If we apply 'shoulds' to other people the result is often frustration

- ▶ Just like Bindweed
- ▶ Before you realize it, this can be tangled in everything!





# Top 5 Weeds from System 1

## Personalisation

***“this is  
my fault”***

Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn't completely your fault. Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault.

- ▶ To me this is Ragweed!
  - ▶ At certain times it can be in the air all around you without noticing it.



# Top 5 Weeds from System 1

## Jumping to conclusions



$$2 + 2 = 5$$

There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:

- **Mind reading**  
(imagining we know what others are thinking)
- **Fortune telling**  
(predicting the future)

- ▶ A different kind of weed
  - ▶ The future weed...
  - ▶ Don't know what it will be but it's going to be bad!





# How you handle your thoughts is how you handle these weeds

- ▶ Keep on the lookout and don't let your guard down!
- ▶ Just because your field doesn't have weeds, what does that mean in a month, week or day?
- ▶ When you find them - prioritize getting rid of them
- ▶ Watch out for your neighbors and family's weeds. If we aren't careful they come over to our field
- ▶ Do some things to prevent them growing in the first place
  - ▶ Proactive coping is a great Pre-Emergent Herbicide!



# Manage your stress by...

- 1. Find a support system.** Find someone to talk to about your feelings and experiences.
- 2. Change your attitude.** Find other ways to think about stressful situations. "Life is 10% what happens to us, and 90% how we react to it."
- 3. Get organized and take charge.** Plan your time, make a schedule, establish your priorities.
- 4. Take breaks, give yourself "me time."** At minimum, take short breaks during your busy day.
- 5. Take good care of yourself.** Eat properly, get regular rest, keep a routine. Allow yourself to do something you enjoy each day.

# Manage your stress by...

6. **Learn to say "no."** Protect yourself by not allowing yourself to take on every request or opportunity that comes your way.
7. **Get regular exercise.** Exercising regularly can help relieve some symptoms of depression and stress, and help us to maintain our health.
8. **Slow down.** Know your limits and cut down on the number of things you try to do each day, particularly if you do not have enough time for them or for yourself.
9. **Laugh, use humor.** Do something fun and enjoyable such as seeing a funny movie, laughing with friends, reading a humorous book, or going to a comedy show.
10. **Learn to relax.** Develop a regular relaxation routine. Try yoga, meditation, or some simple quiet time.