

# Personal Resilience



Farm  
Advisory  
Service

National Advice Hub  
T: 0300 323 0161  
E: [advice@fas.scot](mailto:advice@fas.scot)  
W: [www.fas.scot](http://www.fas.scot)

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) situation is changing on a daily basis and many of us are feeling worried and anxious about what lies ahead. At the start of the month, the Farm Advisory Service launched a Personal Resilience campaign that sought to help farmers and crofters who between Brexit, falling stock prices and outside pressures, were facing tough times. Little did we know that a virus that pays no heed to borders or market prices would soon shutdown the country. Looking at our resilience is something that we are facing as a nation! Personal resilience isn't binary – we've all got it to one degree or another, nor does it normally come automatically – it's a skill which you can develop.

Research shows that there are five things that you can do to build your own personal resilience, and these are known as the Five Ways to Wellbeing. They are; connect, be active, keep learning, give and take notice. You can still work on these while social distancing.

**Connect** – connecting with other people is essential for your mental wellbeing and can help to build a feeling of self-worth, allow you to share experiences and support / gain support from others. Farming is often a solitary job, so it is important to make sure you connect with others when you can. You could:

- Try to eat meals together as a family
- Arrange a catch up with friends or a farming neighbour that you haven't seen in a while, there's lots of digital ways of catching up face-to-face. Phone a friend while you're doing tractor work such as ploughing – it might make the job less monotonous!
- Make a bit of extra time to speak to employees / contractors / vets / reps / advisors when you speak to them on the phone. Having a cuppa with your chat will help it to feel more sociable.
- And when the coronavirus crisis is over, join a local community group such as church, history group, community council, help out at kids clubs etc.

**Be active** – we all know that being physically active is important for our physical wellbeing, but it also has positive effects on our mental wellbeing. Exercise releases endorphins which improve your mood. Farming is often a very physical job, but there are many aspects of it that are sedentary too. Try:

- Walk round your livestock rather than taking the pickup or quad. Not only will you be getting a bit more exercise, but you'll be getting up close to stock which will help with handling later on.
- Join an online exercise class. There are a lot of instructors now running classes live on social media or you can find classes on YouTube.
- Set yourself a fitness challenge such as running 5k. Many farmers and crofters will have the space to do this whilst keeping up social distancing and it's better than doing 400 laps of the living room!

**Keep learning** – learning new skills has been shown to boost mental wellbeing by boosting self-confidence, connecting with others and helping you build a sense of purpose. You could:

- Check out the Farm Advisory Service website. We have lots of publications on a range of farming and crofting topics, or you could download one of our podcasts or webinars.
- Consider learning a new hobby. Fancy taking up cross stitch, juggling, making sushi, painting? There are lots of online tutorials that you can access for free.

**Give** – the act of giving to others can improve mood and increase your resilience. Some suggestions of things you could do are:

- Consider volunteering with a charity. Why not contact your local RHET and see if they need classroom speakers or farmer hosts? Some of these activities may still be going on digitally.
- Offer to help others. Is there a neighbour who needs to stay isolated due to coronavirus and need shopping or supplies dropped off?
- Spend time with friends or relatives who might need support or company.

**Take notice** – we've probably all heard of the term "mindfulness" and may even have dismissed it. But mindfulness really is about being present in the moment and taking notice, taking time to slow down from the hectic pace of modern life. Why not try:

- Deep breathing exercises. There are some great apps to help with basic breathing and mindfulness, such as the Calm app. Or look up some mindfulness guided breathing exercises on YouTube.
- Take five minutes when checking your livestock to stop and really observe your surroundings. Quiet time in nature is a great way to start mindfulness.
- Try an absorbing activity such as colouring, reading or doing a jigsaw. Just a few minutes a day doing something that takes full focus can help you "take notice".

If you need more advice on personal resilience or on any other topic, the Farm Advisory Service has a range of support and help available:

## Advice line

For free telephone advice on a wide variety of topics including cross compliance, water framework directive requirements, climate change and other technical issues call us on 0300 323 0161 or email [advice@fas.scot](mailto:advice@fas.scot). The advice line operates between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday. Support with your resilience is also available from RSABI ([www.rsabi.org.uk](http://www.rsabi.org.uk)). You can call them on 0300 111 4166. Their helpline is open from 7am to 11pm all year.

## Bespoke Advice and Grants

FAS can also help you to increase the profitability and sustainability of your farming business through Scottish Government grants including Integrated Land Management Plans (ILMPs) – worth up to £1,200. The ILMP will identify opportunities and cost savings for your business, based on an independent and confidential assessment of your business by an experienced farm business adviser of your choosing. As part of your plan you can choose to benefit from up to two further specialist advice plans.

## Online

Our website contains articles, videos and much more at [www.fas.scot](http://www.fas.scot)

Scotland's Farm Advisory Service (FAS) is part of the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) which is co-funded by the EU and Scottish Government, providing information and resources aimed at increasing the profitability and sustainability of farms and crofts.

Grant support, a full programme of events, a subscription service for crofts and small farms, and a range of articles and publications form the core of this service which is designed to provide integrated advice for farmers and crofters across Scotland.



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