Utilizing an arts-base approach to improve mental health and stress in Farm Worker communities
About me:

- History of work in farm worker community
- Clinical Social Worker
- 20 years at Purdue
- Role with National and Indiana AgrAbility
AgrAbility History

Several similar programs prior to establishment of AgrAbility at federal level

AgrAbility began through the 1990 Farm Bill with funding starting in 1991

In 1991, there were 8 funded state and regional AgrAbility projects (SRAPS); as of 2022, there are 21 SRAPs and several previously-funded affiliate projects

One National AgrAbility Project (NAP) supports the SRAPs
What Disability Types does AgrAbility Address?
Disability within the Agricultural Community

- Causes of disability
  - Traumatic injury (agriculture is one of the most hazardous occupations). Many injuries also come from off-farm incidents.
  - Disease (Arthritis impacts many farmers)
  - Aging (Average age of U.S. farmers is 58+)

- Prevalence of disability
  - At least 12.9% of farm population impacted by disability
  - At least 740,000 of the U.S. farm, ranch, and agricultural community impacted by disability

Multifaceted Impact

- Employment
  - Supporting self and others
  - Paying taxes

- Quality of Life
  - Giving hope
  - Restoring sense of worth

- AgrAbility Clients

- Community Impact
  - Employing others
  - Reducing need for public assistance

- Family
  - Engaging clients
  - Support
AgrAbility Projects 2022
Migrant/Seasonal Farmworker Risk Factors

- Isolation
- Suffer mortality/morbidity rate higher than the vast majority of American population.
- Poverty
- Limited Access to Healthcare
- Hazardous Working Condition
Interpersonal Sources of Stress

- Family Problems
- Relationship Issues
- Mental health
- Addiction
- Long hours
- Being away from family and community
- History of Trauma
Symptoms of Mental Health or Stress Problems
Symptoms of Mental Health Challenges and Stress

- Sleeping/Withdrawn
- Drug/Alcohol issues
- Family Violence/Problems with Anger
- No interest in participating in family activities
- Loss/Increase of Appetite
- Lack of Family/Community Connection
Barriers to seeking help for stress and mental health in farm workers

- Poverty
- Access
- Limited English Proficiency
- Limited resources
- Cultural norms
- Lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate services
Breaking the Silence: Social Attitudes around Mental Health Disabilities

Male Involvement

Social Acceptance of struggle

Myths about mental health

Media messages

Social Taboo-shame, lack of dialogue

See mental health as weakness
Language and Culture
Concepts of Health
Concepts of Help Seeking
Effects of Trauma

Behavior we see in triggered traumatized individuals appears impulsive, very out of touch with what is going on in the environment; they are responding to internal stimuli.

A history of trauma can make it difficult to:

- Cope with stresses of everyday life
- Trust others
- Benefit from relationships
- Maintain memory, attention, thinking
- Regulate behavior
- Control expression of emotions
PEOPLE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED TRAUMA ARE:

- 4 Times More Likely To Become An Alcoholic
- 4 Times More Likely To Develop A Sexually Transmitted Disease
- 4 Times More Likely To Inject Drugs
- 15 Times More Likely To Commit Suicide
- 2.5 Times More Likely To Smoke Tobacco
- 3 Times More Likely To Have Serious Job Problems
- 3 Times More Likely To Experience Depression
- 3 Times More Likely To Use Antidepressant Medication
- 3 Times More Likely To Be Absent From Work

Source: Capacitar.org
Increasing Cultural Relevance of Mental Health Outreach and Services
Social attitudes about alcohol/drug use.

The Community blames person with disability or mental health challenge.

People with mental health disorders are stigmatized in the community.

Communities are silent about mental health and in denial about prevalence.
Using art to talk about mental health and stress

- Facilitate dialogue
- Additional elements needed
- Various mediums
- Tool for mobilizing communities
- Problem solving
Experiential Learning Concept
Materials

- Examine your space
- What's available..What can you afford?
- What’s transportable?
- Type of art: movement, visual, music
- Medium: music, scarves, clay/plasteline, pencils, paint, crayons, voices...
Setting the stage

- Self Awareness
- Creating a Safe Space
- Role modeling
Framing the Issue

- Spirituality
- Oral History of Culture
- Synergistic view of health
- Informal approach to help seeking
Focus on the Journey

- May experience strong emotions or reactions
- Do what you need to do to take care of yourself
- Practice positive self care
- Art can help you express things that are beyond language
Creating a Safe Space

- Self-compassion
- Connecting to self
- Art may provide insight
- Stress relief
Theater Arts
Acting on Impulse
Music
Moving toward Prevention
Adapt to your audience

Questions