

# Steering Straight: My Plan to Keep on Track

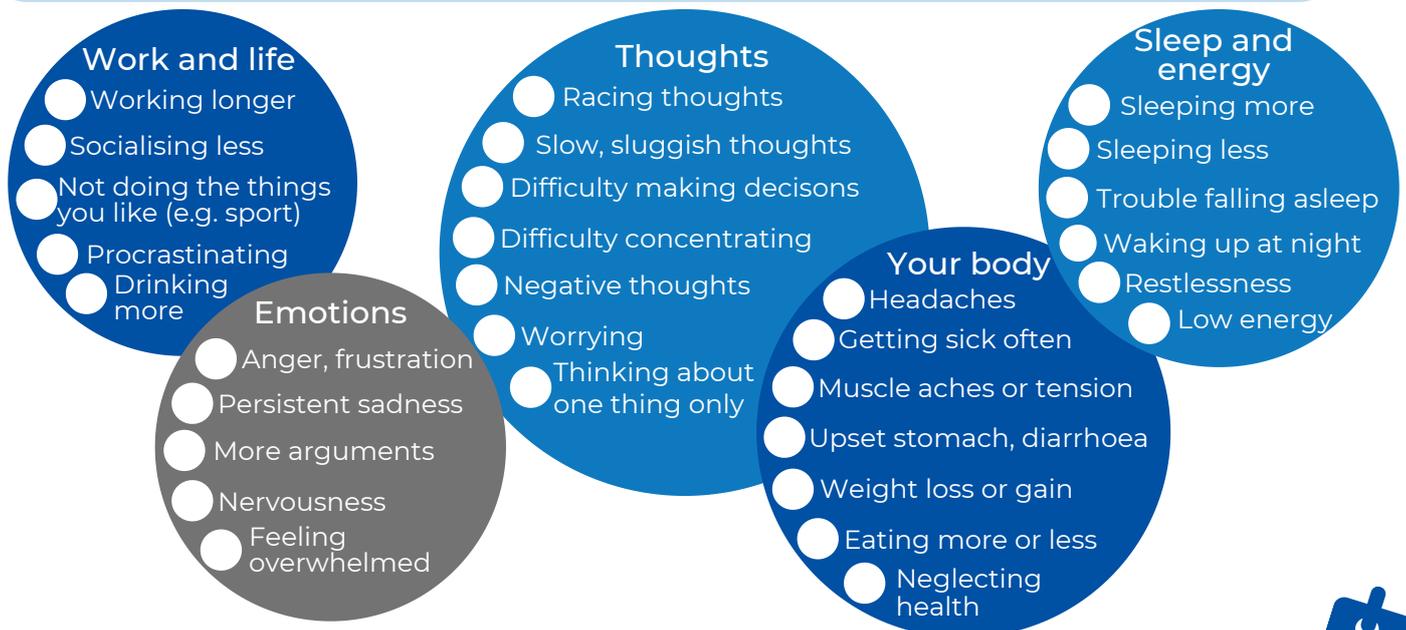
In today's busy world, it's hard to find time to take stock and plan for the challenges ahead. However, like a map, plans can help you stay on track. This includes making a plan for how you can support yourself. This is the best way to protect the things that matter most to you: your farm, how well you do your job, your family and relationships, and your health. This plan will help you to:

- Know what activities are helpful and keep you feeling positive during tough times
- Achieve future goals, and break them down into manageable steps
- Know who you can call on for support when tackling a goal or a challenge

You can take action, right now, by putting pen to paper. So make yourself a cuppa, find a quiet spot, and start *Steering Straight: My Plan to Keep on Track*. It takes most people about 15-30 minutes.

## 1. Taking stock: what signs show me that my stress levels are rising?

(a) When people find themselves in challenging situations, it is normal to feel some stress or worry. You may notice changes in your body, what you are feeling, and how you act. Everyone reacts a bit differently. In the circles below, tick the changes you have noticed in yourself during tough times (or that someone else might have pointed out).



**Work and life**

- Working longer
- Socialising less
- Not doing the things you like (e.g. sport)
- Procrastinating
- Drinking more

**Thoughts**

- Racing thoughts
- Slow, sluggish thoughts
- Difficulty making decisions
- Difficulty concentrating
- Negative thoughts
- Worrying
- Thinking about one thing only

**Sleep and energy**

- Sleeping more
- Sleeping less
- Trouble falling asleep
- Waking up at night
- Restlessness
- Low energy

**Emotions**

- Anger, frustration
- Persistent sadness
- More arguments
- Nervousness
- Feeling overwhelmed

**Your body**

- Headaches
- Getting sick often
- Muscle aches or tension
- Upset stomach, diarrhoea
- Weight loss or gain
- Eating more or less
- Neglecting health

(b) Are there any other signs that you have noticed in challenging situations (e.g. actions, thoughts, feelings, in your body)?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

(c) Sometimes, we know we might feel stressed at a particular time or during a particular event. Are there any events in your life that increase stress?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Examples:**

- Summer (anticipating drought or bushfires)
- Anniversary of a death
- Coming up to shearing



2. It's OK to experience the changes you wrote down in Question 1. Everyone feels some stress, even when life is good. The trick is to keep it manageable. If you regularly do small things that help you feel good (and don't cause harm to yourself or others), you are well on your way to stopping things from getting out of hand. Think about what positive actions you can take by yourself, and how your mood might improve if you spend time with others (people or pets). Remember to do these things when life is going well, as well. It's like healthy eating - you don't just do it when you're crook.

**Tip!**  
Keep your ideas manageable. Try and think of some things that don't take much time.

(a) When I feel stressed or worried, what can I do to reset?

**By myself:**

- E.g. Listen to my favourite song
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**With someone else:**

- E.g. Call a friend for a yarn
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

(b) When I feel down, what can I do to feel better?

**By myself:**

- E.g. Cook something for fun
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**With someone else:**

- E.g. Play with the kids/grandkids
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**3. What do I enjoy?**

(E.g. Gardening, a favourite spot to sit on the farm, playing golf with friends)

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



... and how can I make sure I will do these things?

- Set a reminder in my phone/diary
- Do something I enjoy with a friend
- Share my plans with others
- Write a reminder on a sticky-note
- Each morning, write down an enjoyable activity I plan to do today
- Look at *Steering Straight* every week to remind myself

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



#### 4. What's ahead of me?

Farming and farm life is about achieving small goals with a bigger goal in mind. What's coming up that you can plan for? What positive change can you include in your life?

##### Today

E.g. Go for a walk (10 mins)  
E.g. Focus on my breathing (5 mins)

##### Next week

E.g. Chair the CFA meeting  
E.g. Footy training  
E.g. Prune the roses

##### Next month

E.g. Book a health check  
E.g. Have friends over for a BBQ

##### Next 6 months

E.g. Prepare for shearing  
E.g. Increase my number of alcohol free days

##### Next 12 months

E.g. Plan time away from the farm

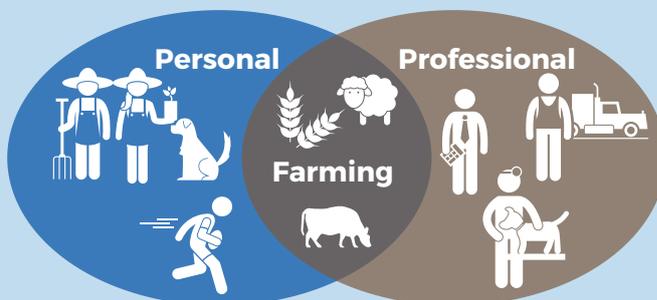
**S**pecific  
**M**easurable  
**A**ttainable  
**R**elevant  
**T**ime bound

You might want to use the S.M.A.R.T goal setting template to help your planning:  
[www.farmerhealth.org.au/2017/12/15/goal-setting](http://www.farmerhealth.org.au/2017/12/15/goal-setting)

	What's my goal?	When does it need to be done by?	What do I need to do?	Who can help me?	How will I know I've achieved it?	Tick when done!
Example	Prepare for shearing	February/ March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Book contract team</li> <li>Order supplies (wool-packs)</li> <li>Service equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contracting service</li> <li>Spouse</li> </ul>	The sheep are shorn! REWARD Go fishing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Example	Book a health check	January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Call the doctor</li> <li>Arrange for someone to look after the farm for 2-3 hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spouse</li> <li>Friend</li> </ul>	I've had the health check. REWARD Play with the dog	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> <li></li> <li></li> <li></li> <li></li> </ul>		REWARD <input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> <li></li> <li></li> <li></li> <li></li> </ul>		REWARD <input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 5. Who's in my network that can I talk to?

Farming issues can cross both personal and professional territory. When facing a problem, you might want to include whoever can help you with a whole range of farming or personal issues. Your professional network could include your stock agent or agronomist. Your personal network may include a trusted neighbour or someone from your local community group. Think about when people are available to talk to.



### Tip!

If you can't think of who can help, see Question 6 for ideas. Or, a friend might be able to recommend someone.

Other people I know

Category	Topic	Name	Phone number	Best time to contact
Personal	Just for a yarn			
Personal	Sensitive issues			
Professional	Financial issues			
Professional	Work-related			
Professional	Health and wellbeing			

## 6. Useful resources

The National Centre for Farmer Health has gathered useful resources for farm men, women, and agricultural workers. They are available online at the following links.

The *Managing Stress on the Farm* booklet is available to download and in hard-copy (free). Resources are listed at the back of the booklet.

<https://bit.ly/fh-stress>

An online psychology service (available online or via phone). Psychologists with farmer health training are available.

<https://bit.ly/fh-lysn>

Contact details of organisations that support farmers (e.g. emergency information, emotional support services, farm business support services, etc.).

<https://bit.ly/3qnOLDh>

Now that you have taken the time to complete *Steering Straight: My Plan to Stay on Track*, put a copy somewhere you will see it often, such as the fridge or the back of the toilet door. It is also a good idea to have a copy when out on the farm, so keep a photo of it in your phone, or a copy in the glove-box. This is **your** plan – you can update it whenever you need to accommodate life's surprises.