Are You Tressed out? Here are five steps to help everyday mindfulness.

When life gets to you, try taking a few moments for yourself. We’re being hit with all kinds of new signals this spring: don’t leave home, but do exercise; don’t forget others’ difficulties, but do keep away from other people. And that’s on top of the usual stressors in life.

Taking a few moments each day to practice everyday mindfulness is something completely free that any of us can do to help relieve stress and improve concentration – both of which can improve emotional and physical health, say the authors of Everyday Mindfulness, a K-State Research and Extension resource that covers the origins of “mindfulness.” It also highlights research studies that confirm its effectiveness in children and adults.

Five basic steps to everyday mindfulness include:

- Commit to uninterrupted time each day to practice a mindful meditation. Start with as little as five minutes a day. Many find benefits from 20 minutes or more.
- Choose a quiet place away from technology.
- Find a comfortable position in a chair or sit comfortably on the floor.
- Focus on your breath flowing in and out.
- Release negative thoughts.

More tips about everyday mindfulness is available online. More information about physical and mental health resources in local communities is available through county and district K-State Research and Extension offices.

Resist the temptation to snack while working, nutritionist says.

Make a conscious effort to avoid ‘crisis eating’. As more Americans work at home to stem the tide of the current COVID-19 pandemic, they are quickly learning that it’s a whole lot more tempting to snack when the refrigerator is just a few steps away.

That, coupled with the stress naturally associated with the outbreak, can lead to unhealthy eating, says Kansas State University nutrition specialist Sandy Procter.

“As humans, we want to be in control and so when we need to cope, a lot of times we crisis eat. And for most of us, that’s just not a healthy pattern,” Procter said.

“We might over-consume sweets, or over-eat in general. For some people, they may not eat enough, forget to eat or avoid food, or drink too much coffee and bombard their system with excess caffeine.”

Procter said there is a body of research indicating that people can consume an entire package or dish of food while distracted and not even feel full.

“If we are working at our home office and eating at the same time, we know that we can consume huge amounts of calories and not even realize that we ate,” she said. “We have talked often about mindful eating: Eat when you’re eating, and work when you’re working. Just because now it’s all in the same environment, doesn’t mean you can successfully mix them all together.”

Procter recommends buying healthy foods that can be re-packaged at home as pre-portioned snacks. Doing so is sensible for parents as well as for children who also are staying home from school these days.

“Keeping snacks a little bit controlled will probably serve us well in a number of ways,” she said. “For one thing, people will be able to maintain that schedule of feeling hungry at meal time a little better. And you may not have to venture out to the store in the middle of the week to purchase a few more things. It helps if we can learn to be mindful of those extras and try to make them last.”
In addition to planning healthy snacks, Procter recommends taking time for a few deep breaths, stepping away from the news now and then, and making a schedule to take a walk or get some other form of physical activity each day.

“If you’re being active, chances are you’re not mindlessly eating at the same time,” she said. “It’s a good way to break up the day and reinforce positive health habits.

“We aren’t able to be in control of a lot of what’s happening right now. When you think about all of the change that has been thrust upon families and individuals just in the last few weeks, it’s all mind-boggling. So, taking the time to realize that there are still some things that you can choose and capably be in charge of, and that can help improve your situation, is one way we can feel just a little more in control of our own situation.”

More information on family nutrition and health is available online from K-State Research and Extension.

**Recognize when food is solely for comfort**

K-State Research and Extension nutrition specialist Sandy Procter said it’s important to recognize when food is becoming a comfort, rather than a need.

“I think of the old King Kong movies where a crowd of people is running off into the distance, waving their arms and screaming,” she said. “We need to resist going there in our heads as much as possible.

“That means realizing that we really do have a choice when we go to the grocery store. Nobody is forcing us to buy the extra large container of unhealthy, empty calorie food. We are in control.”

Procter suggested buying healthful foods that will satisfy a sweet tooth or a desire for a savory snack, and make you feel full, such as fresh or canned fruit; celery and peanut butter; and bulked goods, such as popcorn.

More health food tips are available online from the K-State Research and Extension food, nutrition, dietetics and health program.

**Time to start scouting wheat for stripe and leaf rust**

There were a few more reports of stripe rust from Oklahoma this week and a twitter report of the disease in southeast Kansas bordering Missouri. Several colleagues made visits to research sites in south central Texas and reported severe leaf rust on varieties known to be susceptible to that disease. To date, extension agents, crop consultants and growers all indicate that rust is not widely active in Kansas.
With the wheat crop in south central and southeast Kansas approaching or already at the flag leaf emergence stages of growth, growers are encouraged to be on the lookout for diseases. When people think of stripe rust, they often visualize the characteristic bright yellowish-orange lesions on adult plants (Figure 1). Symptoms of stripe rust on younger leaves are often less rectangular because the fungal growth within the plant is not limited by the veins of younger leaves (Figure 2).

Scouting tips

When scouting wheat, it is important to look down within middle layers of the crop canopy for symptoms of disease. Wheat puts out new leaves rapidly during the vegetative growth prior to heading. In some cases, plants may add a new leaf every 7-10 days. These new leaves at the top of the canopy are less likely to express disease symptoms simply because it takes time (10-14 days) for the disease to develop. Focus on leaves that where present over the last 2 weeks. These leaves have a higher probability of infection than the new leaves at the top of the canopy.

More in-field observations will be happening over the next week. Stay tuned for additional detailed reports on the wheat disease status soon.

Erick DeWolf, Plant Pathologist

Hodgeman County Soil Temperature Update

For last week (April 10-16), the average soil temperature at 2 inches was 53.7°F with a range from 43.6°F to 67.8°F. Temperatures at the 4-inch depth ranged from 45.9°F to 64.8°F with a 53.9°F average. (these temperatures were taken from the Hodgeman County station on the Kansas Mesonet - http://mesonet.k-state.edu/).
Air temperatures will move the soil temperature some as you see the high and low soil temperatures. Compare those temperatures to the air temperature average of 45.4 on temperatures ranging from 19.7°F to 83.7°F. Why is this important? Cold soils can lead to chilling injury for newly planted corn. A recent drop in air temperatures, and subsequent soil temperatures, has put some risk of chilling injury to newly planted corn.

Chilling injury to seeds

Cold temperatures can result in injury to the germinating seed as it is absorbing moisture – a problem called *imbibitional chilling injury*. Damage to germinating seeds can occur when soil temperatures remain at or below 50 degrees F after planting.

Soil temperatures at the 4-inch depth during the first 24-72 hours after planting are critical. It is during this window that the kernels imbibe water and begin the germination process. Kernels naturally swell when hydrating – taking in water. If the cell tissues of the kernel are too cold, they become less elastic and may rupture during the swelling process, resulting in “leaky” cells. Injury symptoms may include swollen kernels that fail to germinate or aborted growth of the radicle and/or coleoptile after germination has begun.

Chilling injury can also occur following germination as the seedlings enter the emergence process. Chilling injury to seedlings can result in:

- Reduced plant metabolism and vigor, potentially causing stunting or death of the seminal roots
- Deformed elongation (“corkscrewing”) of the mesocotyl
- Leaf burn (Figure 3)
- Delayed or complete failure of emergence, often leafing out underground

Chilled seedlings may also be more sensitive to herbicides and seedling blights.

Before making any decisions, fields should be scouted 4-7 days after the cold occurred since the extent of the damage and potential for new growth will be evident during this time.

![Chilling injury to seeds](image)

**Figure 3. Leaf burn from freeze damage early after corn emergence. Photo by Ignacio Ciampitti, K-State Research and Extension.**

Producers should consider all these factors when deciding on the planting time. More information about the planting status of summer row crops will be provided in upcoming issues of the Agronomy eUpdate. Stay tuned!

Ignacio Ciampitti, Crop Production and Cropping Systems Specialist
Herbicide applications and cold temperatures

Recent drops in temperature have prompted concerns about the effectiveness of herbicide applications made during cold weather. The general recommendation for this situation is to wait for warmer weather to make herbicide applications. There are a couple of key factors that lead to this recommendation.

**Herbicides are most effective when plants are actively growing.** This is especially important for systemic herbicides such as glyphosate and 2,4-D. There is a theory that contact herbicides, such as paraquat (Gramoxone), may be less effected by cold temperatures because they do not have to be translocated throughout the plant to be effective. In general, weeds grow best with temperatures greater than 60°F.

![Weeds](image1.png)

**Figure 1.** Weeds commonly found in fields during early spring, such as shepherdspurse (left), henbit (center) and marestail (right) grow best in temperatures greater than 60°F, which means herbicide activity on these weeds will be reduced in colder weather.

**Crops are more susceptible to herbicide injury in adverse growing conditions.** When applying pre-emergence herbicides to corn, be aware that corn stressed by cold soil will not metabolize herbicides well. Herbicide applications of Group 15 (acetamide) herbicides such as S-metolachlor may result in crop injury during extended periods with cold, wet soil conditions.

Another factor to consider is that sprayers that are not drained and/or protected from cold temperatures can be damaged if water freezes in the system. This could lead to damage the sprayer equipment (valves, pumps, etc.) that results in lost time and/or costly repairs.

Even though pressures to complete field work are extreme this time of year, the best plan for maximum herbicide effectiveness is to wait. Warmer temperatures are forecast in the near future. If waiting is not possible, consider increasing herbicide rates to the maximum allowed by the label and utilize adjuvants that might be optional under normal temperature conditions.

Sarah Lancaster, Extension Weed Science Specialist

"Bugs" That Eat Toilet Paper

For those of you that have been stocking-up on the toilet paper during the COVID-19 crisis I have some bad news...there are insects ("bugs") that will actually feed on toilet paper. Some insects actually have an affinity for toilet paper that may be related to the "softness," which makes it easier for the insects to chew on the toilet paper sheets. One of these insects is the silverfish [Order: Zygentoma (Thysanura)], which is grayish-white, segmented, elongated, and approximately 3/4 inches (19 mm) long. Silverfish
have two antennae that move back and forth in motion and there are three long tails or bristles protruding from the back of the abdomen. In addition to silverfish, cockroaches, termites, and booklice may occasionally enjoy munching on toilet paper sheets. Silverfish will start feeding on the outer edges of the toilet paper and move inward.

Most people keep their stockpile of toilet paper in the basement. However, this is a prime environment for silverfish development and reproduction since, in general, basements are humid and damp. The higher the humidity, the faster silverfish will develop and reproduce. In general, the life cycle (egg to adult) takes three to four months. Toilet paper that is stacked on shelves next to a wall provides a nice "buffet" for silverfish.

By the way, the guns and ammunition that are stockpiled will not provide any assistance against toilet paper eating "bugs." However, below are ways to protect your valuable toilet paper from silverfish and other "bugs:"

1. Keep all toilet paper in the original packaging.
2. Place toilet paper in PVC tubes similar to the ones used for drainage that will allow you to stack the toilet paper rolls on top of each other. Be sure to seal both ends to exclude silverfish and other "bugs" from getting at the toilet paper.
3. Place toilet paper in a heavy duty plastic garbage container with a tight-sealing lid. In addition, you can place moth balls in the bottom of the container to repel any "bugs."
4. Place toilet paper in heavy duty Tupperware containers with tight-sealing lids. Again, placing moth balls inside may help to repel any "bugs" from munching on the rolls of toilet paper.
5. Place diatomaceous earth (DE) around stacks of toilet paper to create a barrier. However, make sure there are no gaps in the barrier that silverfish or other "bugs" can get through. If a silverfish or even a cockroach tries to cross the DE barrier, their cuticle will be ruptured leading to a loss of water (dehydration)...and they will die!

Well, I hope this article will help everyone to sustain the usefulness of their toilet paper so that when you have to go...you do not find out too late...that a silverfish or other "bug" has enjoyed your toilet paper before you can use it! (Raymond Cloyd, Extension Entomology)

Keep Mower Blades Sharp

Lawn-mowing season is here. Remember that dull blades give the lawn a whitish cast. A dull blade does not cut cleanly but rather shreds the ends of the leaf blades. The shredded ends dry out, giving the lawn that whitish look. A sharp mower blade is even more important when the turf starts putting up seed heads next month. The seed head stems are much tougher than the grass blades and more likely to shred. Under normal use, mower blades should be sharpened about every 10 hours of use. (Ward Upham)

Video of the Week: How to Sharpen a Mower Blade

Asparagus Beetles

Asparagus should be doing well now that it isn’t being frozen back all the time. That won’t hurt the plant, by the way. You will lose the spears that were frozen but the plant is fine. However, be on the lookout for asparagus beetles. Both the adult and larvae of asparagus beetles feed on asparagus spears by chewing the tips and spear surfaces, leading to scarring and staining of the spear tips. Asparagus beetles overwinter as adults in trash near the garden. The adults are a blue/black beetle with a red prothorax with yellow spots. The larvae are a soft, greenish grub. Small, elongated, black eggs — sticking out long ways from the side of asparagus spears — are laid on developing spears.

Early control of beetles is important to reduce feeding damage later. Permethrin will provide control but requires a 3-day waiting period between spraying and harvest. Permethrin is found in Garden and Farm Insect Control and Eight Vegetable, Fruit & Flower Concentrate. (Ward Upham)
Rhubarb Harvest and Seedstalks

Rhubarb, like asparagus, is a perennial vegetable. It is harvested for the leaf stem, which is also called a petiole. Some years rhubarb will produce large, hollow-stemmed seedstalks that arise from the center of the plant. These should be broken or cut out as they appear so that energy will go into plant vigor rather than seed production. It will take several weeks for all the seedstalks to appear so be vigilant in removing them. Newer varieties of rhubarb are selected for vigor, bright red-colored stalks and less of a tendency to produce seedstalks than the older types. (Ward Upham)

Termites or Ants

Both termites and ants are able to swarm and may have wings during part of their lives. Since these insects are close to the same size, people often misidentify flying ants as termites. Since flying ants do not attack wooden structures like termites, it is helpful to be able to tell the difference.

Fortunately, there are several differences that can easily distinguish the two. For example, ants have a thin waist; the waist of a termite is thick. Also, ants' antennae are elbowed, while termites' are curved. Thirdly, termites have two pairs of wings that are of equal length. Ants also have two pairs of wings, but theirs are of unequal length. Homeowners who find signs of termite activity should shop for a reputable pest control firm. (Ward Upham)