



A Tough Breed

Film Discussion Guide

Photo Credit: Nate Kenney

Film Summary

“A Tough Breed” is one of four short films highlighting the impacts of climate change on human health in Montana. This film focuses on some of the ways climate change impacts mental health, and provides some solutions, especially as they relate to the Montana agricultural community.

Pre-Film Discussion

Before watching this film, answer the following questions based on your own knowledge or experiences:

- Which groups may be at an increased risk for mental health problems?
- What are some of the challenges to accessing mental healthcare in rural areas?
- What do you think are possible solutions to overcoming these challenges?

Post-Film Discussion

~ This film highlights mental health in the agricultural community. What are some of the ways the film shows mental health outreach for this population? Do you think these efforts are successful?

~ What are some of the challenges that still exist for supporting mental healthcare, and what are some possible solutions?

~ Consider a different population or group that may be at increased risk for developing mental health issues (see back):

- In what ways does climate change impact the mental health of this population?
- What are unique challenges or stigmas around mental health care that should be considered for this population?
- What solutions could be used to promote mental health care for this population, and how do these solutions differ from solutions for the ag community, as shown in the film?

~ In Montana, ten different populations have been identified as vulnerable to the health impacts of climate change¹. Mental health is just one health effect, what could be other ways that climate change impacts the health of these populations?



Please see back for additional information

¹ Vulnerable populations include people: with existing chronic conditions; threatened by and working outside in increased heat; living in proximity to wildfire smoke; facing food and water insecurity; who are very young, very old, or pregnant; with limited access to healthcare; living in poverty; lacking adequate health insurance; with mental health issues; and who are American Indians.

Climate Change, Stress and Mental Health in Montana

Higher temperatures, increased size and frequency of wildfires, and unexpected weather events can result in increases in respiratory illnesses, G.I. disorders, vector-borne disease, allergies and asthma, heat-related illnesses, preterm labor, and stress and mental illness, along with impacts on water resources and food security^{2 3}.

- The livelihoods of many Montanans are connected to the land. Climate surprises, drought and wildfire can greatly impact agricultural and ranching communities. Furthermore, these events can cause great property damage.
- Individuals in rural communities have limited access to healthcare, especially providers of mental healthcare.
- Communities that extract, process or distribute energy are at risk for acute mental-health concerns in the event of mass layoffs and plant closures, with economic hardship and loss of occupational identity at the core of this.
- Many Montana farmers and ranchers have reported feeling moderate to high levels of anxiety related to climate's effect on their business and profitability³.
- Montana has one of the highest per capita suicide rates in the US, which is twice the U.S. average. Climate change is expected to make this worse.
- Climate surprises can increase PTSD, anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts.
- Research suggests increasing temperatures are linked to worsening mental health.
- Parents should talk to their children about climate stress. As of 2022, 84% of youth worldwide are moderately worried about climate change⁴.

Resources and Recommendations

- As a first step, acknowledge that you or a loved one needs help.
- Find local crisis counseling, primary care interventions, individual and group therapy, and practices that increase emotional coping abilities.
- Take action. We feel better when we are involved in change.
- Visit [Beyond the Weather](#) for the ag community.
- More climate and health resources are available at [Montana Health Professionals for a Healthy Climate: Health ToolKit](#).
- Visit the [Rural Behavioral Health Institute](#) for information about mental health screenings for youth.
- Visit [Chapter 3](#), p.50-51 and [Chapter 5](#), p. 127 of the C2H2 report.
- Contact the Montana Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Crisis Lifeline, 24/7, at 988 or by texting "MT" to 741741.
- More climate and health resources are available at [Montana Health Professionals for a Healthy Climate: Health ToolKit](#).
- See the C2H2 report: [Chapter 4](#) to read more on vulnerable populations and [Chapter 5](#) for Climate Health Actions.

² [The 2017 Montana Climate Assessment](#)

³ [Climate Change and Human Health in Montana: A Special Report of the Montana Climate Assessment](#)

⁴ [The Lancet](#) or Hickman et. al, 2021