

Field Day Podcast Ep. 17 Nathan Brown

Jordan Hoewischer All right we'll get started here. So Nathan tell me who you are, where you've been, what you do and what you're doing here. So just give me the spiel.

Nathan Brown Well my name is Nathan Brown. I farm in Highland County and I'm a first generation farmer. My wife and I have been married 17 years and we've got twin boys, Coy and Luke that are eight and my little girl just turned six.

Jordan Hoewischer So your little girl is probably the most hardened person in the family, considering the boys?

Nathan Brown Very much so, she is the one. She's kind of built like them little brick, brick houses. That's kind of her, I mean she's chunky but she's solid muscle. She's 18 months younger but we took her to the doctor the other day for a checkup and she weighs more than the boys and she's right same height so they might as well be triplets, actually.

Jordan Hoewischer Yeah.

Jordan Hoewischer She's going to need it probably and then maybe the other ones are gonna need the warning. So we're here to talk about something that's not exactly the most exciting thing to talk about but it's extremely important and we're gonna try to just have the casual conversation we usually have but we're going to talk about farmer mental health and I am not even remotely close to an expert on this. But I'm reading articles on it and seeing a lot of momentum towards getting the word out on just trying to push farmers to kind of speak up, especially in times of economic stress and what's going on in the markets these days. We have weather stress. And then just the normal, "I'm running the business with my family" stress that can kind of pile up on people and I wanted to bring Nathan in because Nathan has reached out. Nathan's on our board of directors at Farm Bureau and of the similar generation as me and seems to have some experience with his peers with kind of reached in on mental health so I guess I'll let you expand upon why mental health for farmers and agriculturalists are important to you.

Nathan Brown Starting out, this has been something that's really hit home to me. Being a first generation farmer, I didn't necessarily come from an agriculture background but mental health and your mental wellness has been a part of my life. From beginning my brother and my mother and my father have all had issues at one point in time and something that I've struggled with, whether it's anxiety or depression or maybe not the depression part myself, but the anxiety and just how do you, how do you navigate life?

Nathan Brown We're young parents. How do you know that you're parenting your kids right? And once you throw in the agriculture and all the twists and turns that are thrown at you as a farmer and a person that works in agriculture and I see so many guys that are struggling and they don't know where to go. There aren't the resources out there like maybe there are with, there's not... we have cancer doctors and we have your general practice doctors and all those doctors that are... you know where to go to get help for that kind of stuff. But where do you go when your mind is not working right?

Nathan Brown And we treat mental illness in this country as taboo. We don't want to talk about it. It's not something that, yeah, it may affect me but it's not something I want to show. And mental wellness is the same as my physical wellness. I need somewhere to go if I need to go have a checkup that can help me sort through my issues.

Jordan Hoewischer Yeah. Because, I always say this most episodes, because we generalize farmers a lot. It's easy to do it but sometimes you just have to pick a line and farmers are usually ones to tough through a lot of things right? They shoulder the burden of a lot of things. Maybe their family's income, debt, just the day-to-day physical work that's there and then oh, by the way, if they have a blip that comes up mentally or in their mental health. Oh, they're supposed to shoulder that too without actually expressing it to anybody. There's so many relationships to manage on the farm. It could be husband/wife, brothers, father, daughter, father/son. There's so many relationships to manage and I think from my experience both with families and stuff on farms I feel like a lot of the things that we've just chalked up to "Oh, that's just generational differences, they just butt heads" is stress and mental health kind of rearing its head on both ends and in such a stressful situation.

Nathan Brown Oh very much so. Very much so. There's so many dynamics that come into play when you start talking about agriculture, and as you said we bear so much ourselves and we don't like asking for help. We don't, I know more farmers that farm by themselves that have nobody else that helps them on a daily basis, than I know operations that are six, seven, eight, 10 people.

Nathan Brown It's that one person and he's the one that, if it doesn't go right, he's the one to blame for it. If he goes bankrupt, he's the one to blame for it. If his crops fail, it's all on him and that can be a lot of, more than people can handle sometimes. And I've heard people say, "well if you can't handle the stress, then get out." Well that's not really a fair statement for anybody because if you had cancer, you just need to quit your job because you have cancer? No. I mean you're gonna go find help. And it doesn't always have to be professional help, I don't think. You need to build a good support of peers. Me and my wife have one of the best relationships that you can ask for. We are open and honest with each other and it was just this weekend, we were joking around, we were in the car. We were talking about this subject a little bit and she said, "you know you're getting pretty good with this mental health."

Nathan Brown I said, "What do you mean?" She's like, "Well you're getting a whole lot better at hiding it than you used to be. I was like, "What are you talking about?" She's like "Well, you're probably sitting there thinking about, 'Well, we just finished planting beans but we got spraying to do, we got side dressing to do, we've got this thing going on. We got cows that are, we just turned the bull out so we're in the process of breeding. And then we're talking about three and four or five six inches of rain come this week. And you've got wheat. Plus you got board meetings coming up and you got all this other stuff.' Plus we've got..."

Jordan Hoewischer You have a family.

Nathan Brown Plus we've got kids that are playing T-ball and baseball and just trying to navigate life. And I think as a business owner and an agriculturalist, there's just more weight that is put on that person. But we need to realize that that doesn't make us a bad person.

Jordan Hoewischer Yeah. And I think hopefully as the gender gap and the gender relationships close and become more and more equal with husband and wife relationships, especially running businesses and farming businesses that they are able to help kind of broach the subject. Because I feel like, like you said it's kind of taboo and it's tough to broach that subject because farmers generally haven't been the most expressive but I

think hopefully our generation can help lead the way a little bit more on saying, "OK hand up, I need some help. I'm gonna go see somebody" and hopefully that is a, it needs to be a husband/wife thing if possible. And I'm not saying that if you don't feel comfortable doing that, then by all means don't do it. But I think bringing your significant other into the fold is really key in that part.

Nathan Brown That's very much the key. Having that support from her. I could not do what I've been doing and what I'm doing on a daily basis if it wasn't for her and her support.

Nathan Brown And there's a lot of guys that aren't married or their spouses passed on or whatever and to those guys I say, "Reach out to your family. Reach out to your buddies." Even the guys that are married, put together a group. That's one great thing I like about, and I'm aged out of it now, but the Ohio Young Ag Professionals group. You can meet so many guys and so many agriculturalists and farmers from around the state and gather your network and find people that you connect with and use those relationships, those bonds to get through tough times mentally that you're having or whatever. And that's one great thing I like about our organization and organizations in agriculture. They bring people together and you can put together that community because it takes a community.

Jordan Hoewischer And that's why, not to toot the Farm Bureau horn, but that's why the Farm Bureaus of the world and organizations are good because farming can be isolating. Like you said, some people don't have the help or they just don't have that avenue to express what's going on and I think it's always good to surround yourself by people going through the same situation. Either someone who's raising kids or somebody who's just starting out farming or somebody who just lost a family member or whatever that situation is. I think it's good to surround yourself. Because for me, I feel like even when I look at other couples or other relationships or how people handle themselves in a meeting, I'm always gleaning stuff off of how people are reacting so I can either learn from it for good or for bad and what to do or what not to do and I think surrounding yourself with people that are going through that same situation especially something as harsh as a bad farming season or down markets or whatever I think is really key.

Nathan Brown Well that's very true and there's a lot that we have to realize that are out of our control. I mean we had from 12, 13, 14, 15 there we had some really good years and we had some really, really good crops. At least a lot of us had a lot of good crops. And now we're kind of in that... prices aren't there where they need to be, inputs are still through the roof. Then you take a spring like well I won't even say spring I mean because so many of us struggled last fall. Basically it started raining, at least in my neck of the woods, it started raining in June last year and it has not stopped.

Jordan Hoewischer Yeah, it's the wettest 12-month span in 124 years.

Nathan Brown I mean, that's just crazy. And that's... I know for me, we didn't finish. I farm my own ground and I do some custom and we didn't finish up some of our custom stuff until the spring. And the stress and anxiety of knowing that I still had crops standing in the field and we had snow flying or it was 10 below or whatever I mean, and trying to figure out how I was gonna pay my bills last fall really hit home there for a little while and I put together my group of peers and we all met and talked, and talked with the wife and we kind of got through it. Thought, 'Hey 2019 is going to be the year we're gonna knock this sucker out of the park.' And come April 1st, I was all ready to go to the field and ready to get some planting done. And it started raining again. It never stopped. And we tried and

we had a couple days there where we got in in April and got some spraying done. And we've got one field of beans planted. And then it didn't stop raining for a month. And I was about ready to pull my hair out. So what do you do? And at the end of the day you gotta sit back and realize that God is in control and you can't control what happens.

Jordan Hoewischer So we talked about professional help and non-professional help. What have you seen in your world? You said you've got a group of peers together what have you seen in your world in terms of how farmers that you know are dealing with the stress of the season and just mental health in general?

Nathan Brown I think a lot of them have been reaching out on social media and kind of bridging that gap and talking with each other. That's one thing that I wish... we have mental health professionals in this country and not enough. But when it comes to agriculture, agriculture is a different beast. I mean it's more than a job; it's more than a career. It's a lifestyle. And for a mental health professional to be able to work in that realm they have to understand that. If you don't come from an agricultural background, it's hard to understand how all those pieces put together. We're working. Hopefully we can get some more mental health professionals in the state of Ohio. That's something that has been on my plate and something that I really want to work towards because there isn't a lot of help other than peer to peer communications.

Jordan Hoewischer Well I think it's good to kind of wrap it around, specifically to farming because I have an article in front of me where they list a dozen things that maybe you should do to like improve your mental health. And if you just, I'll read some of these, and just think about in the framework of being a farmer and what you do throughout the day. One is exercise. One is get plenty of sleep. One is eat healthily. The other one's balance work and play. Avoid working to weary. Take time to unwind before bedtime. Contemplate, pray, sing, meditate, be in the moment, laugh, keep your sense of humor. Accentuate the positive. Inventory your skills and strengths. List the things you're grateful for. Take time to unwind before bedtime, I think maybe it was repeated. So when you think about that in the few months during planting, in the few months during harvest, and maybe in between, if you're even busier than that, you can't fit those in your day a lot of times.

Nathan Brown It has been very hard to fit those kind of things. You know being involved in social media and stuff, one thing I've noticed, during planting season guys don't take vacations. They don't take trips. They don't go to ballgames. They don't do all those extra things and I've noticed more guys and I think it contributes back a lot to the mental health. They're going camping. Some guys were going out of state for vacation right in the middle of planting and they don't have planting done. My wife and family we all went to a Reds ballgame right in the middle of planting season and that's not something that normally... that's not something that we would do but being able to take time to unwind and forget about the farm and get away from the farm even if it's just for a couple hours.

Nathan Brown When we went to the Reds game, that was such a relief for me. I got away, I forgot all about all the problems at home and had a great evening with my family and it was awesome.

Jordan Hoewischer I'm glad you weren't sitting there thinking, 'Man it's dry enough to play baseball and maybe dry enough to be in the field.' They've got a little bit better drainage system...

Nathan Brown There is a little bit of that.

Jordan Hoewischer Yeah maybe some forced drainage going on in their ballfield but, no I think that's a good point. Maybe I'm being a little pessimistic about what can be done on the farm and maybe it is possible. I'm removed from it a little bit but yeah I see how hard charging everyone is during planting season, but I can see how taking those those mini breaks even if it's a couple hours it's not going to set you back forever if you just take that moment. So that's a good point.

Jordan Hoewischer What other tools...there's a suicide hotline. There's a crisis risk hotline that you can text people. And I'll probably throw some of those numbers in, post our conversation, but is there any other tools that you would suggest to farmers or any other avenues, or is it just kind of like, 'Hey talk to somebody that you're comfortable talking with' and maybe try to start there?

Nathan Brown Well number one is talk to somebody that you feel comfortable with. Seek professional help. It may not be something in your town and you may have to go to Columbus or Cincinnati or Cleveland, and then they may still not be able to fit all the pieces together. But talk to somebody. And the Ohio State Extension. They've been working on some mental health stuff. So that might be another resource for you to reach out to, just to see what what they can help you with.

Jordan Hoewischer I think I think the biggest thing is just knowing that there's other people in your situation. You're not gonna be a pariah. You're not gonna be this outlier that's gonna be like, 'Oh man that guy over there. He had a breakdown or he's almost did or whatever.' I mean I would say that there's gonna be way more people in your situation than not, just considering everyone's kind of in the same situation right now with the national farming economy. So you're definitely not gonna be alone. And I think that's a good kind of bookend to stop there on the mental health topic, unless you have something else.

Nathan Brown The other thing I want to bring up. Not everybody suffers from that, but you have friends, you have people and watch and observe their daily routines. If they're changing, if they're involved in alcohol, drinking more, or they're not showing up on time...Just check on your friends. Say, 'Hey, you doing OK?' Because a lot of times, just that little bit will open up a lot and that means a lot to people.

Jordan Hoewischer That's a great point. And that's definitely an overlook on my part here. Most farmers are pretty patterned, right? You probably don't even set an alarm, a lot of times. You kind of get up at the same time. Your body knows. You fall asleep at the same time because your body knows. So when you do see that erratic behavior or something that's totally different where, 'Hey Dad's not coming around as early as he did or he's kind of doing a lot of scouting on his own and not really engaging or doing anything', then there's certain signs I'm sure that could really set off the warning signs for sure.

Nathan Brown That's exactly right. Farmers are a creature of habit. They do pretty much the same thing every day. They've got the drive, they've got the goal, they're driven for what they want to get accomplished and if you start seeing that slack, say, 'Hey do you want to talk? You doing ok?'. Just make sure and tell them how much you appreciate them.

Jordan Hoewischer Yeah, and it's tough. That is not an easy thing to do. I mean no matter how, what type of relationship you have with your family members, it's a tough thing just to sit back and really express how you feel about somebody, let alone if you think there's something deeper there that needs to be explored but there's a lot of private moments on the farm. There's a lot of quiet places. There's a lot of opportunities to have those conversations where it's an echo chamber...it's a, it's a vacuum, I mean where it's just, it doesn't have to be repeated after that. And I think taking that moment and it seems like, researching this and thinking about it and talking about it with you, where I feel like we just chalk up this subject to so many other things. Just like, I almost compared it to, PTSD to be all "you're shell shocked" or whatever. It's like yeah I think it's reared its head so often and so long for people and it's nothing new. We've just kind of chalked it up to other things or kind of said, oh that's just farming, that's just being busier, that's just being stressed and I think maybe there's an avenue, there's a solution there for a lot of people to have a smoother time with it because I don't think the risk is going to get lower. It may ebb and flow a little bit but we are entering a continued risk environment. It's probably not going to get any better so we need to be as strong as we can in all facets to keep farming healthy and keep farmers healthy and keep moving in the right direction.

Nathan Brown Farming is a high risk, high reward occupation and the mental side of it is not going to get any easier and if we think about our weather and our crops that we're going to have this year. I mean this is not just going to affect the farmer that can't get his crop planted. And not going to have grain to sell at the end of the year. But what about all of the elevators that you sell your grain to or all the dealers that you gotta take your seed back to, or fertilizer that you didn't buy or chemicals that you didn't buy and their paychecks depend on the type or the business or whatever. A lot of the little mom and pop elevators and that kind of stuff, they're going to struggle too. And even the nationwide chains, the local dealerships, they're going to hurt too.

Jordan Hoewischer I agree it's going to be definitely interesting times. So we'll transition to our second topic, end on a lighter note. One of the biggest passions it seems you have on the farm is cover crops and so you have a cover crop event coming on later in the summer. Can just tell me kind of the world that you've kind of started cultivating, no pun intended, on cover crops and you have a Facebook group, you have some stuff happening so can you give us a rundown on kind of your involvement with cover cropping.

Nathan Brown Being a first generation farmer, I guess I've always tried to think outside the box and look at what's coming down in the future and as I've been involved with organization stuff across the state I get to see what's been happening with water quality and things and so I've kind of set it as a mission of my own, to figure out how I can farm better and then to help guide my community in that direction. I think we started cover cropping four, five years ago, maybe a couple more, probably seven years ago we started cover cropping, and we've evolved and tried to grow our experience and tried to learn how to change our management to be successful in cover cropping. Because you can't just jump into cover cropping and say, Hey, I'm going to put a 10-way blend out there and I'm going to plant corn into it when it's six foot tall and everything's going to be peachy keen. That's not how it works.

Nathan Brown So we've evolved from doing a straight cereal rye cover. Now we're doing some blends and mixes and we're planting green and I thought this would be a good time to, as I've learned, would be a good time to kind of bring the community in and say Hey this is the things that we're learning and this is what we've got going on so. On August

21st, at my farm in Highland County, we're going to have a field day and I think we're going to start around...

Nathan Brown We're going to have registration around 9:30 and try to get the program started around 10. Love to have you down (Jordan) and give a little water quality update and what's going on with policy around the state. And then we're gonna jump right in. Jim Horman's gonna be down from NRCS and we've got a girl from Extension gonna be down, kind of talking about nutrient management and that kind of thing, and then we'll have Dave Brandt, he's gonna be out in the fields. We're gonna have some plot work out there, different blends and mixes that you can come out and look at and then kind of to wrap the day up, at the end of the day we're gonna have some demonstrations. So I'm gonna have my seeder out, planter out and I've got an arial applicator coming and lined up. He's actually is gonna fly some cover crop seed on. And there will be some demonstrations out there for people to look at and kind of give them a idea of what's out there and what's possible and how to get things seeded. So it's gonna be really fun day.

Jordan Hoewischer Yeah it seems like it, I mean Dave Brandt has just become I mean probably world famous for cover crops and I see him popping up all over the place giving talks. I'd say that's a good get to have him come give those talks because I've seen him in person and they're very informative and he's a good guy to have.

Nathan Brown I got to go to his field day this April and I was really excited about the knowledge and just the wealth that he has and his experience. He started cover cropping back in the early 70s and he's still going strong today so it's...

Jordan Hoewischer Stronger than ever. I mean there was a lot of people at his field day wasn't there?

Nathan Brown Yes there was a lot of people.

Jordan Hoewischer A thousand plus or something like that, something crazy.

Nathan Brown I don't know that there was quite that many, but he had a really good turnout. I'm excited about that.

Jordan Hoewischer I think one of the talks that I'll probably provide is not only the policy and the laws around the state but I mean they're saying the hypoxia zone in the Gulf of Mexico is as big as it's ever gonna be or has been. And so that's obviously where the water flows from your part of the state amongst a huge watershed around the country so I think that'll be a big topic because cover crops are extremely effective for nitrogen and then kind of iffy on phosphorus especially DRP. I mean some of the edge off field stuff saying it's maybe not as effective but still benefits of increased organic matter and water holding and all that but I think it's gonna be huge especially in these years where we're getting all this rain. You know anecdotally some of the farmers that were planting green this year on standing cover crop were probably able to get in the field a little bit better, had a little bit more protection for the seed once it got in the ground in really poor condition. So I think you have some hooks there if someone hasn't been able to kind of jump in on cover crops, this might be the year.

Nathan Brown Yeah that was one thing that we experienced. We flew some cover crops on last fall and you talk about the nitrogen. We applied some manure...there's a sow farm on one of our farms so we didn't get our manure applied until December last year and

when they actually applied it was moist conditions for what we normally like to get it on. So we ending up reducing our rates because of that. And that cover crop out there really soaked up that nitrogen from that manure application. That was one thing that really really excited me, seeing the difference that that made, holding that. And we're really, I'm excited to see how much nitrogen I can cut back this year. We're doing some tests and making sure that we're not going to be over applying. So that has been one thing and that was kind of another reason that I've got into doing cover crops and stuff. We hear a lot about the Western Lake Erie Basin and what's going on in northern Ohio. But guys don't really, 'it's all up there it doesn't affect us down here in southern Ohio.' Well, we start talking about what's going down our rivers. Down the Mississippi, down the Ohio, down the Little Miami, down the Greater Miami I mean all the nutrients are flowing off of our fields and going and contributing to the dead zone down there and that's something that has gained more attention. It's going to continue to gain attention. So that's something that the farmers all across the country need to be thinking about.

Jordan Hoewischer Yeah because that's where it seems like the nitrogen and phosphorus issues kind of split. Phosphorus is an animal that's shifted a little bit. It's shifted into a dissolved version that is getting into the system that we didn't quite realize was a thing up until recently. But nitrogen has always been a thing that we know is kind of a leaky nutrient and that's money leaking out of the system one way or the other so that's one that I feel like it's not easy but it's easier to capture the value in doing cover crops and trying to reduce that rate because that's the ultimate goal is, can I get a quality crop. The goal that I need on my crop while continuing to decrease that nutrient load and I think that's a huge story especially nowadays where maybe you won't be able to get on the field to put nutrients on sometimes. Maybe the price point's just going to kill your margins for that year or whatever the reason is. I think it's a huge thing to start to wrap our heads around.

Nathan Brown At the beginning of the year when we were sitting down doing budgets and stuff, the cost of all fertilizers were up compared to what they were last year and our grain prices at the time were way far compared to what they were at the same time the previous year. And as you know start looking and saying, Where can I cut back? And then as we have evolved through the season so far I mean rain after rain event. And how much of our nitrogen are we losing?

Nathan Brown And we're trying to be good stewards and we're splitting and we're trying to do three or four different applications and different things like that to help keep our nitrogen there. But at the end of the day we're hoping that our cover crops and organic matter and all that kind of stuff and we're trying to build are going to help us hold that better.

Jordan Hoewischer So one of the biggest hurdles it seems like or at least perceived hurdles is kind of that upfront season or two or three or whatever it is where you're kind of flipin' your system from conventional tillage to no-till cover crop. Do you see, did you see a lag when you started putting cover crops into the system or did you see benefits right away?

Nathan Brown I think we began seeing benefits right away. We had transitioned to complete no till six or seven years ago. So about the same time we started incorporating a few cover crops and when we started to incorporate cover crops we weren't planting cover crops on every acre that we farmed. We would pick out the fields that we had the worst erosion problems on, that we knew that we were losing soil, we were losing nutrients and that's where we began our quest to implement covers onto our farm. And since then we

have grown the amount of ground that we have placed covers on and we're seeing nutrient holding that's been better, our water filtration has been better. Our weed suppression, for me, the number one benefit that I can visually see right this point in time has been my weed suppression. Fields that I had [illegible] on the last four or five years that I didn't put a residual down, I've come back in after we planted soybeans, burnt the rye off when it was six foot tall with no, nothing but thirty-two ounces of Roundup and you walk out there today and there is not a weed one out there and there are beautiful healthy soybeans.

Jordan Hoewischer Yep.

Nathan Brown Now I'm not saying that I got a perfect stand because we've had some slug issues and and some different things like that. But I tell you what, if I can cut my, begin to cut my production cost, enough to pay for that cover crop. Plus the benefits that I'm going to get down the road because when you plant cover crop you're not only getting benefits that day or that year but it comes two, three, four, five, six years down the road.

Jordan Hoewischer That's the hardest to put the value on right? I mean, how do you put a, what's the value of incrementally increasing your soil organic matter and how do you put a price tag on that. I'm sure there's some formulas out there but that's a tough one to see because farming changes every season. You know you may have a stop on a dime and pivot to something else or if you can get through it's where you're seeing those benefits kind of come to fruition then great. But it's tough I think to kind of stay the course for some of those farmers are trying cover crops.

Nathan Brown Well then we'll throw another one at you. When you're a beginning farmer like I am and you own very little of your ground that you farm. How do you pencil out on rented land?

Jordan Hoewischer Yes. And that's tough. So that's a big conversation in conservation practices period is how do you apply conservation practices to the ground you don't own?

Nathan Brown And that's one thing that I have been gracious and I have wonderful landlords that are concerned about that kind of thing and are willing to work with me and say Hey I know you're going to have this amount of dollars in doing this and this and let's work together and let's make something that works for both of us. Whether that's a flex lease or reduction in rent or whatever, because they want to see those practices. We live in a, or farm in a regional conservation RCPP area and we've got a quail focus area. So the quail and they want us to do a lot of edge feathering and that thing and we're trying to bring back that quail population and it was pretty cool this spring, I was out planting one of those fields over in that area and out flew this quail and it's like hey this is actually working.

Jordan Hoewischer That's cool.

Nathan Brown And there was some conservation ground along the side of the field but they were out in those cover crops.

Jordan Hoewischer That's cool. Yeah, you gave them a little seasonal cover to some degree so that's cool. And I feel like that's where it's tough because obviously the cover crops they cost per acre. We know that they do, that you're going into the field again but hopefully with field days like yours and continuing to get the word out on. And I know people know cover crops are good overall but are they effective for their farm and I

think that's why Dave Brandt's talks, Field Days at your house, talking to farmers, watching videos on YouTube, plug in on social media, finding those things that work on your farm, finding the species that you think can work on your farm and finding the implements, the tools, the methods. If you're going to spray, or roller crimp or use multispecies or cereal rye or whatever it is, go there and collect those bits and pieces of information that you need and then reassemble them on your farm.

Nathan Brown It goes back to the networking. That was kind of why, if you're on Facebook look up the Ohio Soil Health and Cover Crops group. I started that back in March I think it was and we've got over 560 or 570 people from all across the state that are on there and they're sharing what they're doing, what successes they're having, what failures they're having because your failures are just as important as your successes.

Jordan Hoewischer Absolutely.

Nathan Brown A lot of times you need to be learning from what you've done right and what you've done wrong and which can you change. And cover crops is something that... You can't just say January 1, I'm going to do this and this and this and this is how the year is going to go. This is something that you've got to be able to change your management style or management skills at that moment at that time and a lot of times if you have a group that you can jump on real quick, Facebook say hey I'm having this issue, what are you guys doing or how do you guys get this seeded or what kind of mixes do you do for this or. That plays such a pivotal part in the growth and adoption of cover crops.

Jordan Hoewischer That actually ties into mental health a little bit because in stress, especially for me the biggest hurdle for me to do something is when I don't know how to do it or 's I don't know if I have access to the right tool. And so when you can have somebody say hey I've done this. And then or like go rent this piece of equipment or go try this one or you can come borrow it or go buy it or whatever. I mean that's a huge burden off of you and it kind of ties in an example of how that network can really help be a multifaceted option for you on the farm.

Nathan Brown Very much. I had a friend of mine was on that group and he's actually is a pretty close friend of mine but he's like he was wanting to know about my roller crimper that I bought this spring. He said Are you renting that out? Well, yeah, I said, if you're interested in renting it, I'll load it on a trailer, I got a 16 foot Bobcat trailer I can set it on a trailer. You can come down here and get it and take and use it. And he did, and I put on the group say hey it's in Preble County if anybody else is interested in it. Well you know where it's at today? It's in Van Wert.

Jordan Hoewischer It's traveling the state.

Nathan Brown It's cool that we have that connection and if people need to borrow something or you have resources, Hey is anybody got this or can somebody point me in the right direction to get this.

Jordan Hoewischer Because the goal is obviously to help people but also that trailer will come back to your farm one of these days with something else on it that you can use from somebody else and then you kind of can keep it moving. So I think that's really cool and I think the way you've been able to utilize social media and just your network has been exceptional and I think that's going to push farming in the next into the next stage of just maybe it's not so much an arms race as it used to be. I yielded this or I yielded that. It's

how did you incorporate this thing? You're almost like bragging about how you were able to incorporate cover crops and not so much nitrogen or whatever that is. And hopefully you can keep spreading that word and and then keep moving and it's August 21st is the date. And then by the time this podcast comes out we'll make sure that we can point them in the right direction either assign a link to Farm Bureau's website or .

Nathan Brown We got a link. We're partnering with this with the Highland County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Highland County Farm Bureau group. They're all partnering on this with me and we've got a link there that we can get out to you. And we just there's no cost for the day but we do ask for reservations just for a meal count that day. So going to be a great day.

Nathan Brown Awesome. I think it's all we got for you. I really appreciate you coming in Nathan and talking about kind of a wide variety of subjects but I really do appreciate your willingness to open up about the subject of mental health and open up your farm for this cover crop day and kind of expanding not only the mind of some farmers but also their operations as well.

Nathan Brown Oh yeah, I'm glad to be here. Glad to share my experiences. Thank you Jordan.

Jordan Hoewischer Yeah. Thank you.