

Brush up on your listening skills with COMET™ with live on-line trainings in March and April 2023

March 17, 2023

April 14, 2023

For Immediate Release

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No, we're not talking about a household cleaning product. We're talking about ***Changing Our Mental and Emotional Trajectory*** (COMET™), which is a short, two-hour program and a gentle introduction to supporting friends and neighbors in a "vulnerable space". The intent is to help them shift their mental health trajectory back to a place of wellness and away from the path of a mental health crisis. This program was developed by the High Plains Research Network Community Advisory Council specifically for rural communities.

Live on-line COMET™ trainings will be offered statewide on Friday, March 17th from 12:30-2:30 pm and on Friday, April 14th from 10am-12pm. Instructors for these training are Danette Hopke, Health & Well-Being Educator, Megan Suehring, Positive Youth Development Educator, and Bev Doll, Human Development & Relationships Educator. Pre-registration is required for these free workshops. You can register by completing an online registration form (linked below) or by calling 608-263-3485.

Registration form for the March 17th training: <https://forms.gle/d1GNju2FXNpfPzHy9>

Registration form for the April 14th training: <https://forms.gle/XtFFs3PLxX4JENvaA>

Rural communities and farm families value supporting each other in times of need. COMET™ helps people take the next step after noticing someone might be struggling. It empowers friends and neighbors to be more prepared to support others' mental health needs – especially before a crisis. This training doesn't expect community members to "fix it" but trains people to feel comfortable initiating a supportive but potentially emotional conversation using a conversational seven-question guide. The training encourages participants to be comfortable and present with someone who is struggling but not yet at the point of crisis. The questions were developed from evidence-based techniques from a variety of approaches, including motivational interviewing. It provides an easy way to start a conversation, teaches you how to exit the conversation in a supportive way, and offers resources to share with others if they need more than a listening ear.

Multiple challenges face rural communities in accessing mental health. Existing resources and trainings often focus on crisis needs and immediate suicide risk. However, many people suffer from distress and moderate depression or anxiety, sometimes acutely and/or undiagnosed, that significantly impact their health and well-being. COMET™ fills that gap in resources for people in this vulnerable space and aims to prevent crisis.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension is partnering with [Farm Well Wisconsin](#) and the [High Plains Research Network Community Advisory Council](#) to offer this training to rural and farming communities in Wisconsin.

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For more information or to register for the March or April training, contact joy.kirkpatrick@wisc.edu or call 608-263-3485.

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