

Your most important environment

by St John Craner

Farming always attracts a lot of talk about environmental issues but there's one environment you are ignoring. It's the one in your head. This one is the "top paddock" where you live 24 hours a day. It's the one that talks to you and interprets the world around you, often automatically.

Caring for your environment starts with yourself.

It's why the airlines tell you to put your mask on first so you can look after others because you've firstly looked after yourself.

There's no point attending to your farm environment, until you attend to your own environment which is your mind and the mindset you choose to take.

Author and anthropologist Carlos Castaneda shares these wonderful, wise words about mindset:

"The trick is in what one emphasises. We either make ourselves miserable, or we make ourselves happy. The amount of work is the same."

Our outer world is often a reflection of our inner world.

If you've had a few bad nights of broken sleep you're more likely to have less patience and view things more negatively. You'll be less willing to give people the benefit of the doubt and your temper might sometimes get the better of you.

If you've had good sleep or a good break off-farm with friends or family you're much more likely to be upbeat and positive.

You need to care for and nurture your

internal environment. Your mind needs to re-charge and re-fuel like batteries and bodies.

Running or ruminating on the same narrative loop inside your own head won't help you.

If you have been wronged by someone (and who hasn't?), holding any resentment against that person is, as they say, "like swallowing poison and expecting the other person to die".

You have to break the cycle and catch yourself. And you can only do this if you can catch your thoughts which are driven by your feelings.

If you're not fully tuned in and present to how you are feeling, your feelings can overwhelm you and lead you to making silly, stupid mistakes.

Sometimes you won't be yourself. You'll be under the pump with staff calling in sick, weather, schedule prices or constant interference by bureaucrats sitting in their ivory towers who know little or nothing about the realities of farming.

All of these are a test.

They are there to ask, "will you see them as an issue or an opportunity?"

They demand you to be the best version of yourself often when you're not at your best.

They are asking you — if you'll listen — one of the most important questions you can always ask yourself which is: "What can I learn from this?"

It's no different from professional sports teams and people. Their competitive advantage exists inside their heads. Physical parity is common. A mental edge isn't.

Just look at tennis players who break their

opponents down. You can see it happen before your own eyes.

Notice, too, how the best use the micro-break of playing with their racket, fiddling with their strings and using a towel to take a bit of time to get their head back in the game.

This is how they sustain such high performance under immense pressure.

You always have a choice. You can choose to react or choose to reflect and then respond.

Not all decisions need to be made there and then. Not all decisions are a life or death situation.

Often a simple overnight test will do the trick. Taking the time to stop, reflect and think, versus do, sometimes results in a better result.

That way you can think at a higher level that leads to a higher quality decision. You then consider the first, second and third order effect that one decision leads to another.

If you rush into making one decision lightly you might miss its unintended consequence down the track.

When you're feeling overwhelmed or under the pump, a decision to not make a decision is still a decision.

Make it when you are better or well-rested. Don't be pressured by people.

Another tool you can use is to book "transition time" between tasks rather than running from one thing to the other. When you do that, you can run the risk of taking bad energy into a good energy situation and bring it and the people around you down.

Take time to re-set even if it's five quiet minutes alone on the quad bike somewhere, listening to your boards. Think of it as your

own tennis-playing micro break.

You don't need to do yoga or be the Dalai Lama doing mantras or meditation but focusing on your breath is one of the fastest ways to calm yourself down to face the next challenge life throws at you.

You move from your fight/flight sympathetic nervous system and move into your rest n' digest parasympathetic nervous system.

A minute of thought can save days of effort, so take your time to think things through using the super computer that is your brain.

And remember, either you run your brain or it runs you.

Your brain can be a great servant but also a terrible master.

St John Craner is managing director of Agrarian, a rural sales and marketing company

