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## **"If You Could Not Farm...What Would You Do?"™**

**Article by Jolene Brown, Farmer and Professional Speaker**

*"When one door closes, another opens but we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one which has opened for us."*

*Alexander Graham Bell*

Our world of farming and ranching is a consuming force. We live where we work and we work where we live. We identify our home, our work, and who we are with terms relating to "the farm." That's great, until we choose to or are forced to leave the farm. Then what?

After a number of calls, listening to words or the silence of depression, hearing shouts of anger and unfairness, witnessing people in transition, I've come realize everyone needs a "Plan B". Especially farmers and ranchers. Even if you never plan to leave the farm, just having a mental option of what else you could or would do, gives you additional strength for creativity, necessary risk taking, and flexibility in today's changing times. It also is the next step for those who retire or must change plans due to health or financial problems. "Plan B" reduces the paralyzing, underlying fear of, "I must succeed because this is the only thing I can do."

You have many talents and skills. Farming and ranching require them of you. From scientist and mechanic to public relations and marketing, from food and fiber specialist to doctor and decision maker, from employee and financial manager to lobbyist and leader, **never** underestimate your competencies. Run with your vision and passion and put them to full use on your farm. And, if you choose to change directions, remember, we live in a country where history has proven opportunities abound.

I've had the privilege to visit with many who have added an additional job to supplement their farm income. I've also visited with many who have left the farm. Here are some interesting comments:

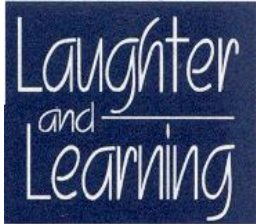
*"It was an insightful moment when I understood that land is just dirt and cows become hamburger, but people and family, that's what really matters."*

*"I had to make a choice. I could spend my time making excuses, playing the blame game and finger pointing or I could build on the best of the past and use it to make my future."*

*"Maturity doesn't come with age, it comes with accepting the responsibility for the reality you've made."*

*"I love to farm, but I've learned I am not the farm."*

*"If you want to be happy with the life you live, take charge. Accept responsibility for where you are and where you're going."*



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*Ask, "What do I want to do and what am I willing to do to make it happen?"*

*"If you are struggling, talk now before you quit talking. Build a team. Ask for help."*

*"Leaving and changing are not easy. My advice? Just keep moving through it and don't stop. What is the right thing to do? You make the decisions before you are forced to and have no choice."*

*"I was petrified of life without my label. I was a farmer. Do you know what happened? I shared my story and my talents, and life outside of farming embraced me."*

I think many of us farm and ranch with the same passion that was inside of Abraham Lincoln. He said, "I've been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go." Yet he rose from his knees, and continued on with Plan A...Plan B... Plan C...

In my workshops, I often require people to write an answer to the question, "If you could not farm, what would you do?" Get out your pencil. What is your answer? Then send it to me at [Jolene@JoleneBrown.com](mailto:Jolene@JoleneBrown.com)

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