



EAP Support during the Bushfire Season – Information to help individuals during the bushfire crisis

Coping with Disaster and Trauma.....

Being directly or even indirectly involved in a disastrous event can cause immediate and long term disruption to your life. It's not uncommon to experience a range of intense and sometimes confusing emotions, such as:

- Numbness / emptiness
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Sadness
- Guilt
- Regret
- Anger
- Relief
- Grief

These emotional responses are normal or expected responses to an abnormal event.

Self-help strategies

Disastrous / Traumatic events impact on people in different ways. However, in general it's important to acknowledge that you are going through, or have been through, a highly distressing abnormal event and that it's normal to expect to have a psychological reaction to it.

There are some simple things you can do to help you process and come to terms with your experience:

- Acknowledge your emotions and thoughts and share them with people you trust. It's part of the healing process. Excessive denial or refusal to accept your feelings may delay the recovery process.
- Keep in touch with your friends, family and colleagues. Seek out other people's physical and emotional support.
- Be patient with yourself. It takes time to recover from the intense emotions and difficult thoughts. Don't label yourself as crazy. Remember you are experiencing normal reactions to an abnormal event.
- Re-establish your normal routines as much as possible.
- Get as much rest as possible even if you can't fall asleep as easily as normal.
- Look after yourself physically. In the aftermath of a disaster we can be more vulnerable to accidents and illnesses. Be more careful than usual, especially when driving.





- Use deep breathing and relaxation techniques if you feel tense and anxious or to assist with sleep disturbances.
- Allow yourself some personal space, without isolating yourself for long periods, to acknowledge that you have been through a difficult time.

Avoid things that don't help

- Overuse of alcohol, coffee and other stimulants.
- Working to excess or keeping yourself so busy you have no time to relax and do the things you enjoy.
- Withdrawing and isolating yourself from others.
- Keeping your thoughts and feelings bottled up, instead of talking about what you are experiencing.
- Making important life decisions during recovery.

Tips for family and friends

- Having your friend or loved one involved in a disastrous or traumatic event can have an impact on you as well. It is often difficult to know just how you can help. You can provide valuable support by being available to them and encouraging opportunities to talk. Just being there to listen with empathy and without judgment is often all that is needed.
- Don't take it personally if they don't want to talk. But remind them you are there if they change their mind.
- Try to give them space and time to recover in their own way.
- Their reactions may be confusing to you, understand that it is a difficult time and acute reactions to a traumatic event may be powerful. It is unhelpful at these times to say things like; 'Pull yourself together.' 'It could have been worse.' 'You need to calm down and get over it.'
- It is helpful to remind them that it can help to speak with a professional counsellor who will understand the nature of their reactions and who will assist them with the management of these reactions and with their recovery.

Contact AccessEAP for confidential enquiries and appointments

In Australia Call

1800 81 87 28 (24 hr urgent phone counselling)

