

Looking after yourself following a traumatic event

Emergencies like bushfires or floods are traumatic and overwhelming events that can affect everyone in the community. People affected by traumatic events might have thoughts and feelings that are distressing – which is often referred to as a “normal reaction to an abnormal event.”

It is important to take notice of how you and those around you feel and behave in case extra support is needed. Everyone has different experiences and reactions, so be patient with yourself and others. Recovery from trauma is a very individual experience and can take time.

What to expect

It is normal for people to have a strong reaction following a traumatic event. You might experience one or more of the following reactions:

Shock

- feeling overwhelmed
- feeling numb and detached

Physical reactions

- cannot eat
- feeling sick
- cannot sleep

Images

- nightmares
- flashbacks of what happened

Thoughts

- confusion
- forget things

Emotions

- fear
- sadness
- anger

Attitudes

- guilt or failure
- questioning your actions

Social

- avoiding people
- needing to talk about it

Behaviour

- increased alcohol consumption

Taking care of yourself and others

Staying in touch with friends and family and talking about how you feel will be important in recovering after a traumatic event.

Looking after yourself

- keep in touch with people you trust
- talk about it
- exercise
- try to relax
- give yourself time
- take a pause and breath slowly

Looking after others

- listen to their worries
- help with simple things
- give them time to recover
- let them show their feelings
- remind them to eat and rest
- ask what is important to them
- reassure them about safety and security.

When and where should I get help?

Do not wait until things become too hard or you feel that you are doing it tough before speaking to someone.

When to get help

- if you are worried
- there is no-one to talk to
- you continue to feel upset
- physical feelings worry you
- you experience loss of hope or a lack of interest in the future

Where to get help

- family and friends
- your doctor
- Social Work Services at your local Community Health Centre
- local community groups
- employee assistance programs

Who can I contact?

You can speak to – or see someone – now:

Lifeline

13 11 14

Rural Alive and Well (RAW)

1800 729 827

Your doctor

Department of Health Social Work Services

(9am-5pm Monday-Friday)

- South – (03) 6166 8354
- North – (03) 6777 1427
- North-West – (03) 6478 6119

Australian Psychological Society Referral Service

1800 333 497

Kids Helpline

1800 55 1800